DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 368 447 PS 021 854

TITLE	The Universal and the National in Preschool Education. Papers from the OMEP International Seminar (Moscow, Russia, December 4-7, 1991). YCF Series 3.
INSTITUTION	Organisation Mondiale Pour l'Education Prescolaire, Warsaw (Poland).; United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Paris (France).
REPORT NO	ED-93/WS/12
PUB DATE	93
NOTE	123p.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Child Development; Creative Development; *Cultural Influences; Demonstration Programs; *Educational Research; Foreign Countries; *Global Approach; Intellectual Development; International Education; Nationalism; National Norms; Peace; Preschool Education; Program Descriptions; *Young Children
IDENTIFIERS	Europe; Finland; Poland; Russia; Sweden; Ukraine; *Universalism

ABSTRACT

This collection of 27 brief essays focuses on universal aspects of childhood and early childhood education, education for peace, model early childhood programs, and the development of children's thinking and creativity skills. The essays are: (1) "The Universal and the National in Preschool Education (Goutard); (2) "Preschool Childhood: Cultural and Historical Aspects" (Kudreyavtsev); (3) "The Role of National Literature in Children's Artistic-Verbal Development" (Chemortan); (4) "From Teacher Training to Teaching Children: Television as an Aid to Contextualization" (Irisarri); (5) "Empathic Sensitivity in Preschool Children" (Sochaczewska); (6) "Verbal Communication of Deaf Children: The Foundation of a Normal Life" (Leongard); (7) "The Subculture of Preschool Children and Make-Believe Play" (Mikhailenko); (8) "The Role of Adults in Children's Play" (Misurcova); (9) "The Individual, Ethnic, and Universal in the Psychological Content of Traditional (Folk) Games and Toys" (Novosyolova); (10) "Tradition and the Child: How Polish Village Children Used to Play" (Kielar-Turska); (11) "Theoretical Underpinnings of the National Kindergarten in the Ukraine" (Artyomova); (12) "A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to a Kindergarten of the Future: The Experience of the Finnish-Russian 'Kalinka'" (Protassova); (13) "Bringing Up Preschool Children in the Spirit of Peace" (Dunin-Wasowicz); (14) "Education for Peace and International Understanding in Early Childhood" (Sund); (15) "Educating Young Children for Peace and World Citizenship" (Tsuchiyama); (16) "Principles Underpinning Preschool Education Programmes" (Poddyakov); (17) "Psychological Principles of the New Model of Public Preschool Education" (Kravtsov); (18) "Which [Preschool] Programme?" (Branska); (19) "Programmes for Kindergartens" (Martin); (20) "'Landmarks'--A Programme for Preschool Education" (Grazhene); (21) "The Importance of Professional Self-Appraisal in Developing the Skills of Kindergarten Teachers" (Pan'ko); (22) "Construction as a Means of Developing Thinking and Creative Imagination in Preschool Children" (Paramonova); (23) "Psycho-Pedagogical Approaches in Studying and Stimulating the Child's Creative Activity" (Roussinova-Bahoudaila); (24) "The Development of Creativity in Infant School" (Castillo); (25) "To Be Six Years Old in Sweden in the 1990s" (Pramling); (26) "Development of Cognitive Faculties: One of the Main Objects of Preschool Education" (Yenger); and (27) "Interactive Curriculum--Interactive Pedagogy" (Pesic). Also contains summaries of eight other papers. (MDM)

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THE UNIVERSAL AND THE NATIONAL

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In this series:

- *Famille en mutation dans une société en mutation (Colloque: Conseil international des femmes, Bruxelles, 1992)*
- *The universal and the national in preschool education (OMEP International Seminar, Moscow, December 1991)*
- *Emergent literacy in early childhood education*

THE UNIVERSAL AND THE NATIONAL IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

PAPERS FROM THE OMEP INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

MOSCOW

4-7 DECEMBER 1991

Published by

OMEP World Organization for Early Childhood Education
and
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ED-93/WS/12

Authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this book and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

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Foreword

We live in a world of interdependency. Children belong to the inner world of the family and school, to the local culture and environment in which they live, but they are, at the same time, citizens of their countries, and members of the human race, belonging to the international global society. All that happens in the world, and in the country where a child lives affects in some way the child's present or future. Economic and cultural setbacks, because of war or environmental catastrophes and crises affect the child, directly, in terms of health and development, and indirectly, in terms of prospects, through destructive influences on the family, on schooling, and on care.

Every human being engages in crucial first experiences during the early years of life. Attitudes are formed and skills and habits acquired, which will influence the future learning ability and personal outlook of the growing individual. Are we able to create a learning environment which teaches the child about peaceful coexistence, cooperation, and show our ability to solve conflicts, as well as work for international understanding? How shall we prepare a child for a future world very different from the one in which we live now? In what way can innovation in early childhood education help to release creative strength and a positive self-image in our children? These and many other questions are analysed and discussed in international fora today. We are therefore happy with the choice of theme and with the interest it has awakened in our national committees, and across this big continent, the part of Europe which is now undergoing such great changes.

For the first time in the history of OMEP, members were guests in Moscow, assembled in December 1991, to take part in the international conference arranged by the Russian OMEP Committee. Our hosts were the Russian Academy of Education, with the Research Institute for Preschool Education, assisted by the department of Foreign Relations of the Academy.

I would like to express my thanks to these institutions and to Dr. Larissa Paramonova and her colleagues, for inviting the World OMEP to this conference, which had the theme: 'The Universal and the National in Preschool Education'.

Within this theme, five different areas were defined:-

1. the unique value of early childhood in the development of the individual;

2. the development of the child and children's activities;

3. play and its place in preschool education;

4. childhood and society;

5. theory and practice in early childhood education.

Although this conference was prepared and realized under extremely difficult circumstances, and although it was necessary, because of the politically critical days in August 1991, to move one part of the planned event, the World Council, to Oslo, our organizers did their utmost and succeeded in making the conference a success.

For the participants, coming to Moscow also meant experiencing a cultural and historical city with beautiful buildings and sights. Interesting visits were arranged which made the conference and stay rich and gratifying for those who were present. For those who could not participate, we hope that this publication will reduce the loss it was not to have taken part.

On behalf of OMEP, I thank UNESCO for its assistance in publishing the papers from the conference, thus making these important materials accessible to all interested parties

Eva Balke
OMEP World President, Norway, 1992

Preface

The international seminar 'The Universal and the National in Preschool Education' was held in Moscow in 1991, convened by the Soviet (now Russian) National OMEP Committee, the USSR State Committee for Public Education and the USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences (now the Russian Academy of Education).

The focus of the seminar was chosen because it was felt that this topic holds tremendous significance in relation to the challenges facing the world community - the need for establishing mutual realtions and cooperation, the preservation and development of the spiritual culture of every nation, the need to bring world culture and human values within the reach of all peoples. We are currently witnessing manifestations of two important currents:- one, the trend towards common human values relating to spirituality and culture, the other, the aggravation of international conflicts, often leading to grave and appalling consequences. Childhood is humankind's future being founded today. At a very early age, the child acquires the fundamentals of personal culture, corresponding to the spiritual values common to humankind. This is why it is so very important to shape in our children such priceless universal features of personality as love for one's nearest and dearest, goodwill towards those around one, the ability to empathize, and the capacity for creativity, among other positive attributes.

The organizers saw the seminar as a starting point for determining a progressive approach to the solution of an extremely difficult and complex issue - the correlation of the universal and the national within the framework of OMEP. The seminar included both theoretical and practical approaches to the solution of these issues, from various countries, including our multinational one.

On behalf of the Russian National OMEP Committee, I express our profound gratitude to OMEP President Mrs Eva Balke, for her assistance in preparing and holding the seminar, and to Mme Madeleine Goutard and Mr John Bennett for their aid and encouragement toward the publication of these papers. Above all, we wish to thank all the participants for their incalculable contributions to the work of the seminar.

Larissa Paramonova
Chairman, Russia National OMEP Committee

Editors' note:

We have been very privileged to have been asked to edit this collection of papers, for they have provoked our thinking in many ways and we have learned a great deal. We admire the expertise of our colleagues on the Russian OMEP Committee, Drs Paramonova and Elkoninova, who undertook the initial compilation and translation of the papers. The dilemma posed between international and national understandings, and the attempts to make sense of the universal, while understanding our own specifics, makes this set of papers all the more important.

All of us who work in the field of early childhood education bring to it our own histories, but it is interesting to explore the ways in which an organization such as OMEP can encourage members to work at international as well as regional and national levels to:-

- promote optimal conditions for the well-being and healthy development of all children;
- assist with projects to improve the life experiences of young children;
- support and publicize research contributing to our understanding of, and work with, children and their families;
- promote developmentally appropriate early childhood education, and education for peace in the world.

We have arranged the papers to provide links for readers who, like ourselves, were not fortunate enough to be present at the actual event. Though we tried throughout to maintain an international outlook, we have inevitably worked with our own perspective, our own national background. We apologise, therefore, to authors and readers for any misinterpretations and misconceptions arising from our contribution to the work.

Tricia David and Cathy Nutbrown
Chairman and Vice-chairman OMEP(UK)

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SECTION 1: CHILDHOOD AND SOCIETY

Part 1: The universal and the national

THE UNIVERSAL AND THE NATIONAL

IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

Madeleine Goutard
Former World President of OMEP

In discussing the topic *The Universal and the National in Preschool Education*, one must include the 1989 *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* which establishes that every child should enjoy his or her rights in different socio-cultural contexts, and confirms the rights of cultural minorities in particular.

For us, specialists in the field of preschool pedagogics, the science of children's development acts as a universal instrument. Quite often, this knowledge is used for further effective elaboration in the countries of western culture and of Eastern Europe. That is why it is necessary to take into consideration the results obtained in other regions, in order to achieve a more precise analysis of similarities and differences, and a deeper understanding of what is universal and what is particular in preschool education.

The child is a small person, a member of the human race. This is the universal factor. Young children are very sensitive in their perception of culture, with all its vicissitudes and inconstancy. As character develops, the child identifies with one or several communities. Sometimes children become aware of many different manifestations of human cultures.

During the last ten years, OMEP activity concerning intercultural education has been aimed at enabling children's discovery of their own and other cultures, by means of constructive cultural dialogue, which is a source of mutual enrichment. The OMEP work on peace education follows this pattern. It is necessary to defend the process of cultural identification, to prevent loss through repression or rejection, or attacks on cultures caused by incomprehension, intolerance and divergence.

Universality unites different cultures, because when manifestations of cultural differences meet, the cultures involved are seen in relation to each other. For us, teachers, who carry out this educative cultural mediation, membership of OMEP and our participation in this work with children, provide the means for us to return to and re-

experience personal universality to some extent. Unfortunately, many adults have often lost the capacity to identify with and relate to universalities.

It is possible that work on interculturalism will, in the future, offer a context in which it will be possible to broaden the moral sense of responsibility, which applies in its turn to responsibility for the transmission of the universal heritage:- the transmission of cultural patrimony, natural patrimony, and genetic patrimony.

Nowadays people exist in a complex, compound culture. In such conditions, cultural identification supposes not the separation of a particular culture, but life in a designated community, related to other cultures and other communities. Children take an active part in these open, dynamic and creative processes. For this reason, the special programme, *The Child as an Agent and Carrier of Culture*, was undertaken within the theme *Ten Years of Cultural Development in the World*.

It was planned that this programme should begin in one country and then spread all over the world. Its aim is the creation of the 'route of all children'. Children's bright illustrations, demonstrating their ability to represent and transform their cultural environment, and show the fruitfulness of the meeting of cultures, are to be collected together. The OMEP programme for the creation of an *Anthology of Children's Games and Toys* has the same intention.

Recently, the natural environment has been severely damaged. That is why Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states the great importance of teaching children to guard and respect the nature around us. Thus,OMEP held a Regional Seminar in Columbia on the theme *Every Child is the Heir of Nature*. The Seminar showed ways in which this idea has practical applications in different natural conditions. The OMEP Committees of Australia and Denmark came forward with an urgent project. Their proposal, which pre-dated the UN Earth Summit in Rio held in June 1992, focused on 'The Charter of the Earth and resulted in a publication *Child and Nature*, which was available at the OMEP XXth World Congress in Arizona.

The development of biology and biotechnology raises a problem related to genetic inheritance. We cannot ignore the benefits which advances in these fields of scientific inquiry bring, but as a consequence, we are confronted by many moral questions connected with genetic engineering and human nature. This cannot be avoided. Our knowledge of children is based on universal nature. We should conduct the teaching process on the basis of respect for this nature.

It is also important to mention the security and safety of the child. First of all, I refer to corporal and mental cruelty. We all know alternative pedagogical methods are more effective and humane. All types of violence, applied to children, can be perceived as compulsory biological manipulations. The growing increase in nervous disorders in children demands from us our professional responsibility. In accordance with all these concerns, OMEP intends to:-

1) establish the universal bases of education, which would allow children to protect their physical and mental health and integrity from all the risks of the modern world; and take up reasonable measures for health care in collaboration with education;

2) show the ways in which this type of education can be developed through the involvement of families, and by taking account of the ecology of children's development, that is, by being sensitive to their natural environments in social, economic and cultural terms.

In many scientific fields, especially in the field of biology, technology tends to strengthen its domination. But this domination too requires awareness of responsibility. That is why OMEP cannot do otherwise than exercise vigilance in spheres concerning children. Where our universal inheritance is concerned, OMEP will attempt to enable children to:-

1) realize their humanity in different cultures of the past, present and future;

2) be capable of feeling solidarity with everybody and everything existing on Earth;

3) develop self-awareness and self-actualization, in taking on the role of 'agent of humankind'.

PRESCHOOL CHILDHOOD:

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL ASPECTS

Vladimir Kudryavtsev

Research Institute of Preschool Education, Moscow
Russia

There can hardly be any doubt that present-day childhood (preschool childhood specifically) is not only a psychological-educational, but also a complex socio-cultural phenomenon, one that has its own history, its own developmental logic. The only question that arises is how to give concrete expression to this general notion. In the process of actualization, however, we come up against an impressive number of fundamental problems, and not to tackle them means to turn to nought all efforts to comprehend the cultural and historical nature of childhood.

In her time Margaret Mead advanced the theory that childhood is in no way the demiurge of culture, on the contrary, the specifics of human childhood are determined by culture. This, at first glance indisputable, theory is, in various modifications, shared to this day by many scholars, independent of their commitment to one or another theoretical orientation. In modern developmental psychology there is a search for commonalities and regularities in children's development. Childhood is, accordingly, regarded as the sum total, a sort of resume of the historical development of human culture, reproducing in concise form, the spiritual quintessence of this development. As such, the child's psychological development appears as a micro-project of the historical development of consciousness. Such a view of the question is, to a certain extent, justifiable. At the same time, the logic on which it is based cannot be recognized as a universal means of analyzing the cultural-historical status of childhood, since it fixes it in only one, albeit very significant, conceptualization.

This approach may, in our opinion, lead to the concept of childhood as a cultural-historical phenomenon being discarded. Devoid of all self-value and autonomy (precisely in this historical sense!) and reduced to a simple reproduction of historical development, childhood just ceases to be childhood. Self-value and autonomy are by no means absolute. Yet there are no grounds for calling into question the primacy of historical development in the individual as a whole. The historical, and not only the psychophysiological, uniqueness of childhood is a fact which

cannot be ignored, either in the process of scientifically, theoretically reconstructing the nature of childhood, or in the course of designing new educational practices. It is with an understanding of this particular fact that we link the outset of a new view of the question of 'childhood and culture'.

Let us, however, go back to Mead's thesis of culture as the demiurge of childhood. Playing, at one time, a positive role in the polemics with representatives of naturalistic concepts of children's development, this thesis, we believe, serves as a *theoretical statement*, and in a certain sense, as a eulogy of the available place of childhood in the traditional unitary social systems. In routine pedagogical consciousness (of educators, teachers, parents,) the notion of childhood as a miniature copy of the adult's 'socium', which the latter make themselves, took shape long before Mead. This notion reflects the adult world's attitude towards childhood as to a significant and even decisive, though merely preparatory, stage to a 'truly social' life - productive and civic. In fact a study of the literature shows that in discussing 'childhood and culture', the word 'culture', more often than not, stands for 'the adults' world' and its social structures. (Whether or not the identification of these notions is justifiable is in fact a separate question.)

Such an attitude towards childhood certainly did not appear out of nowhere. It is generally accepted that in the early stages of society's development children would have been involved in adult production relations. As the content and forms of production grew ever more complicated, it became necessary to set aside a special period for preparing the younger generations for labour - this period came to be marked out as childhood. However, childhood did not acquire self-value at this time, nor even later, when education and upbringing became social institutions. Klyuchevsky pointed out that, according to a 16th Century work, 'Domostroi' laid down a code and certain rules to be followed in everyday life, which proclaimed patriarchy and the despotic authority of the family head. In terms of the Russian 'Domostroi', a child was no more than an element of the household's social micro-universe, the demiurge and sole subject of which was the father.

The view of the child as a singular being, endowed with a very special mentality and therefore privileged, confirmed itself in Western culture only in the 15-16th centuries (Aries 1977).

Nowadays, the uniqueness of childhood in the life of an individual is widely recognised. And yet its ontogenetic uniqueness is a result, first and foremost, of its cultural and historical self-value. The attempts to perceive this uniqueness, keeping strictly within the

framework of ontogenesis, are utterly hopeless (something present-day psychology and pedagogics do not, unfortunately, take into account), since it is a product of the historical transformation of the actual place in culture occupied by childhood. The principal vector of this transformation is the autonomization of the institution of childhood in the social system.

From the pedagogics and psychology of childhood to its history and sociology, and further on to its cosmology, only such a shift of scientific and theoretical contexts and their mutual correlation provides the possibility of reproducing the logic of the given historical transformation in scientific knowledge. At that, the phenomenon of childhood in culture should be conceived as a natural-historical process (according to Karl Marx) proceeding on a no less global scale than, say, the appearance of social formations in the history of civilization. Childhood itself should be perceived as a 'planetary phenomenon', as a source of the self-development of the aggregate culture, a source necessarily born of world history - not only as a 'accumulator' of this culture, but also its 'generator'. To achieve such a perception it is necessary to emphasize the socially important function that childhood fulfils in the system of culture, a function inherent in it and only in it. In other words the point is the developing mutual determination of culture and childhood (as the vanguard sphere of culture itself), the necessity of explaining the fact that childhood creates culture to the very same extent that culture creates childhood.

When we say that preschool childhood is the initial stage of human development, we sometimes put a certain chronological sense into these words. Childhood actually is the chronologically factual beginning of a human life, but it is not only in childhood that we can trace the etymology of life itself. The very special status of preschool childhood is linked with the fact that within its framework the abilities common to all humankind develop 'in a pure form', irrespective of the solution of any particular, say, professional, problems. The purpose of preschool childhood is engendering and revealing the human in a human being, through the child achieving proficiency in the general (ideal) forms of people's historically developing creative activity and their internally conceptualized content. These general forms serve as a foundation for the specifically children's types of activity which are of a universal, heuristically plastic, polyfunctional and over-situational nature. Due to this they reveal a capacity (practically beyond the reach of adult forms of action!) for reproducing and transforming practically any content of culture.

The universe of human, mediated creative faculties, which makes up the space of the developing communication between subjects of various scale and level, is what we call culture in the strict sense of the word. But then the entire ensemble of children's activities makes up the sole way of reproducing culture as a living whole, not in its particular (professional, specialized) forms.

Turning to the content of children's activity, the articles belonging to historical culture do not in any way turn into an object of purely didactic interest, or a mere carrier of subjective (for the child) novelty. There simply is no other sphere in culture where these faculties would be reproduced in universal form. From this point of view, childhood is absolutely unique. The world of adults has, alas, exhausted the limit of childhood's free time, allotted by history to the universal development of the adult as the subject of culture. An adult's attitude towards culture is always that of a professional. Even scientific, technical, and artistic creativity are professionally specialized forms of creative activity which, in one way or another, bear the stamp of the historical division of labour. And the measure of their creativity is, to a great extent, determined by the presence in them of the childish 'source', as noted by a number of prominent figures in science and culture, from Francis Bacon to Pavel Florensky, from John Dewey to Anna Akhmatova. Opening up the world of culture by the force of their productive imagination, children discover it as a world full of challenges, just as its true demiurge should see it.

Reference

Aries, P. (1977) *Centuries of Childhood* London, Jonathan Cape

THE ROLE OF NATIONAL LITERATURE IN CHILDREN'S ARTISTIC-VERBAL DEVELOPMENT

Stella Chemortan
Research Institute of Pedagogical Sciences,
Krishinev, Moldova

In the developing system of preschool education in Moldova, special attention is being paid at present to the development of a child's personality. One of the basic principles of the new conception of transforming preschool children's education and upbringing is the ethnic-cultural principle. We believe that it will help teachers to put a stop to the processes of de-nationalization and achieve a real upturn in the growing generation's interest in national traditions and national culture.

An extremely important means of basing education on national traditions is through the use of children's books and folklore, and a special programme for the artistic-verbal development of children, in the process of acquaintance with both, has been devised. This begins at an early age and continues throughout the entire period of preschool childhood. To cope successfully with the challenges inherent in this development, the teaching staff at kindergartens proceed from the following propositions:-

1. Artistic-verbal activities are based on artistic images which reflect the most characteristic features of the realities surrounding the children; the facilities expressing these images, however, are very specific, they are created with the aid of literary works;

2. Artistic-verbal activity is always connected with literary works and becomes a reality when children take in these works when stories are told, verses recited, plays staged, or any of these forms created;

3. The artistic-verbal development of preschool children takes place during various types of the children's activity, but the foundations of this development are laid in four different learning activities: recitals and story-telling, learning poems by heart, retelling, and making up tales;

4. Necessary prerequisites for fostering children's artistic-verbal development are: good organization of the educational process, shaping in the children of special and general ways of action, creating

conditions which facilitate their switch to independent artistic-verbal activity.

To this end, conditions are created for the development of artistic-verbal activity in every age-group in kindergartens. During the time free from particular lessons, children, under the guidance of a teacher, are occupied in various activities, such as, looking at picture books, re-telling favourite stories and fairy tales, sharing opinions of the books read to them, and drawing pictures based on the content of literary works; listening to records; staging well-known tales, poems, and stories; performing table, shadow, puppet shows; watching television, and so on.

The work of teaching staff in the sphere of artistic-verbal activity is based on a complex approach, which gives them a chance to systematically interconnect different types of children's activity (painting, music, verbal), both during lessons and in 'free' time. When working out the methodological basis of the children's artistic-verbal development, we proceeded from the need to integrate aesthetic, philological, psychological, pedagogic, etc, issues.

Taking into consideration the necessity to teach children to comprehend texts and creatively reproduce them, great attention is always given to their gradual grasping of general and special modes of action, especially their initial orientation in the emotional-imagery and ideological content of the literary works; their independent quest for ways of expressive reproduction, and their elementary verbal creativity.

To help solve the challenges of the preschool child's artistic-verbal development, we worked out an educational-cum-methodological complex for teachers and children. It includes a textbook for teacher training, called 'Methods of Organizing Children's Literary Activities'; four readers, consisting of the best works of folklore for children, Moldovian classical and modern literature, as well as the best in foreign literature for children; several series of object- and plot-based pictures; printed notebooks, and the 'Preschool Child's ABC'. (Works include poetry and prose, for example, by Alexandri, Argezi, Blandiany, Deleanu, Eminesku, Farago, Kazimir, Koshbuk, Kryange, Rusnak, Topyrceanu, Vangeli, Vieru.)

An up-to-date solution of the issue of children's aesthetic development found its expression in our 'Preschool Child's ABC' - a semi-functional picture book which teachers can use to acquaint the children with the national traditions of Moldova, its flora and fauna, to help them develop speech, learn to read and write. The 'ABC' includes texts and special assignments for teaching the children to recognize the literary genres within their reach.

Experience has shown that the artistic-verbal (literary) development of preschool children can be achieved successfully in the process of acquainting them with works of national literature, provided the following conditions are observed:-

a) if good quality folklore and literary works for children are correctly chosen;

b) if the children are systematically taught to shape general and specific ways of action; if various forms and methods of organizing the children's artistic-verbal activities are made use of;

c) if special conditions are created for the children's independent activities.

FROM TEACHER TRAINING TO TEACHING CHILDREN: TELEVISION AS AN AID TO CONTEXTUALIZATION

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In 1984 the BBC began distributing videos of its 'News Review' in Spain. This is a weekly programme lasting twenty-five minutes and offering a wide range of local, national and international news items. The fact that the news is read by an announcer and also appears on the screen with subtitles means that 'News Review' offers, simultaneously, three-dimensional material, ideal for language teaching: image, speech and writing.

Initially the material was used as part of a training programme for primary school teachers of English, and it had a strong component of supporting written texts in the form of British newspapers. This way adult students went through a learning process which involved: a) viewing, listening to and comprehending the video material; b) silent reading of the news items they had just heard on the video; c) oral activities (re-telling, question and answer, discussion and evaluation).

The idea of transferring a learning activity trainee teachers are familiar with to their teaching practice phase, and to their actual teaching of English to primary and preschool children may seem daring. Nevertheless, it offers interesting opportunities for the development of linguistic skills within a richly varied social and cultural context. Needless to say, the basic difference will lie in the content of the material, rather than in the structuring of the learning activity itself, and in the fact that young children cannot rely on written material. With trainee teachers the emphasis was on linking the current affairs content of 'News Review' with the reading of newspaper materials so that audio-oral skills (listening to the news on video, asking and answering questions) were developed simultaneously.

We focus on child-centred material in the news videos used with children. We have found in addition to providing opportunities for learning language, it has proved to be an excellent source for the sort of situations which can be used to awaken feelings of empathy in children. Taking into account the wide coverage of the activities of the Royal Family by the British media, we find that a Royal visit to a children's hospital, for example, can be a starting point along the following lines:

children are ill; they are not at home;, who looks after them? who visits them? etc.

Sporting news is particularly productive in the teaching of verbs of action (run, swim, kick, jump, etc), and numbers (both cardinal and ordinal) - how many players/ swimmers/ runners take part, who is first, second, last...

News items about animals (relatively frequent in the British media) are specially attractive for children, and they can be used to introduce names of animals, verbs indicating their activities, and then later practised with the help of puppets used for guessing games.

Nowadays satellite television has widened the opportunities for using this type of material, and teachers are not dependent on a single source, since they can record other broadcast material on video. They can then select short items as points on which they wish to focus a varied range of learning activities.

The aim of this learning process is twofold: on the one hand, teachers can close the gap between the sort of materials they used themselves when learning English during their training courses, and their actual classroom experience, and on the other, they make available to their pupils audio-visual/linguistic material within a realistic social and cultural context which is child-centred, or within the reach of children's cognitive and emotional understanding.

EMPATHIC SENSITIVITY IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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The word 'empathy' was introduced into science in 1909 by Titchener as a translation of the German expression 'Einfuhlung'. Since then, empathy as a phenomenon has been the subject of many investigations and theoretical considerations. The question has been tackled by representatives of philosophy, ethics, psychology, sociology, pedagogy and medicine.

In the course of these studies there appeared various definitions of the notion of empathy. At present it is most frequently considered as a process 'of recognising and understanding the psychological state of other persons and entering into their states of mind' (Rembowski 1989, p.48). Such a view takes into account both the emotional and the cognitive component of the complex psychic process.

Development of empathic sensitivity in children

Empathy undergoes changes with development. This can be followed against a background of the socio-emotional development of the individual. Investigations indicate that even babies are capable of what is called empathy, that is, emotional harmony with other people. For instance, a child begins to laugh on seeing someone laughing, and cries on seeing a person crying or even simply hearing another child crying. At first the child does not realise what causes other people to laugh or cry.

In infancy the general mood of the child is strongly dependent on the frame of mind of the mother. The mother's touch, voice and gestures are, for the child, positive or negative emotional signals and a basis for emotional identification.

The capacity to empathize, that is, to experience a common harmony with the mother, is gradually extended to other persons in the child's surroundings and is a basis for presocial behaviour. A two-to-three-year-old child, for instance, pats a crying friend, offers a toy or a sweet, etc. Such behaviour indicates that the child is conscious of the negative emotions of his companion. Young children, moreover, anticipate the results of their own social behaviour and endeavour to abolish the negative emotions in others and produce happiness instead.

The empathic sensitivity level depends on the age and sex of the child, but these relations are not simple, and unfortunately it is not

possible to present the full details here. The statement must therefore suffice that, with age, the child acquires more experience in mutual relations between people, and becomes more and more competent in noting and being conscious of the thoughts, feelings and motives of others.

The investigations of Rembowski in Poland demonstrated that three-year-old children are capable of recognizing some emotional states in other persons. They most readily recognize joy and contentment, and somewhat less easily - sadness, fear and anger.

The significance of empathic sensitivity

Empathy is a very valuable personality trait, both from the individual and the social point of view. The results of studies indicate, namely, a strict relation between the empathy level and the positive behaviour of the individual, such as benevolence, affection, high tolerance level, readiness to help others, to share with them and cooperate. Thus, empathy facilitates interpersonal contacts, motivates altruistic and prosocial behaviour, and reduces conflicts and aggressiveness in a group. A high level of empathy constitutes a specific barrier against antisocial behaviour, whereas a low level may favour socially undesirable and even delinquent behaviour.

It was also noted that subjects with psychological disorders are frequently incapable of higher-degree empathy. It is, for instance, supposed that in schizophrenia and certain psychoses there is a basic lack of empathic sensitivity.

The foregoing considerations lead to the conclusion that empathy should be one of the highly developed qualities of personality. Empathy needs to be most intensively developed in persons who intend in the future to become physicians, nurses, psychologists, teachers, etc.

The development of empathic sensitivity in children

Empathy can be developed at any period of ontogenesis. However, the early years of life are a particularly sensitive period, as they are characterized by intensive socio-emotional development, as well as the development of personality, and a high plasticity of the nervous system.

The pedagogical experiment carried out by Walko (1991) demonstrated that the level of empathy in preschool children can be influenced by a suitable programme of didactic-educational occupations in the nursery school. It appeared that creative activities are particularly appropriate for the development of empathy, and emotions and feelings with a high degree of commitment. These activities were varied, but were

usually based on the following forms of expression:- 1. verbal expression - puppet shows, stage settings, picture stories, analysis of works of art; 2. motor expression - creative gymnastics (Laban-style), pantomime shows; 3. musical expression - composition of short musical pieces with a definite ethos, expressive movement to music; 4. plastic expression - many different forms of individual and collective creative productions by the children.

The programme comprised twelve different educational occupations which took place three times a week, for 30-40 minutes. The eldest group of preschool children took part, that is, a total of 23 (12 girls and 11 boys), over a period of one month. The system of didactic-educational influences applied in these pedagogical experiments proved very effective. Although the period was very short, all the children subjected to these influences showed significantly increased levels of empathy.

Greater attention needs to be paid to empathic behaviour in the programmes of preschool education. We believe that programmes of the kind described above should be applied as widely as possible and become permanent practice in preschool institutions.

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VERBAL COMMUNICATION OF DEAF CHILDREN:

THE FOUNDATION OF A NORMAL LIFE

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The number of children being diagnosed as having a hearing loss, and those with a profound hearing loss together with speech and language disorders, is increasing in all countries. The social status of adults with a hearing impairment depends on the point of view, or position, taken by the people who organized their education from the first days of their lives.

One position is that of a 'defectologist', who regards 'profoundly deaf children' as persons who originally, irrespective of all further education, have an individual 'special' psychology and special means of communication, and who are doomed to communicate freely only within the framework of their own 'subculture'.

An alternative position asserts that it is not the diagnosis which determines the fate of such children, but the conditions in which they are brought up and educated, and in which they live. This theoretical position contends that from birth all children, including those with impaired hearing, are equally ready to integrate into the life of the society into which they were born. Those with a profound hearing and language difficulty, and other children with a hearing loss (with a normal intellect) can make full use of the culture of their people and of the means of communication adopted in the society in question. These children should grow up in an ordinary verbal environment and, in communicating among themselves and with normally hearing people around them, both adults and children, they should employ oral and written forms of speech.

This second approach is the foundation for our practical activity. It is known as the 'Method for Developing Verbal Hearing and Verbal Communication' and is being worked out by the Laboratory of Work Continuity at Kindergarten and School in the Scientific Research Institute of Preschool Education. Our pupils can learn the artificial forms, the manual alphabet (dactylology) and mimetic gesture language if they wish to, after becoming socially adapted, and after being able to freely and

independently communicate with hearing people. This is a matter of choice left to the children themselves.

The 'method' is being employed in diverse organisational conditions - within the family, in preschool groups for children with a hearing impairment at ordinary and special kindergartens, in special classes of ordinary schools and in special boarding schools. It is used only by those parents and teachers who elect to do so. What is it in the 'method' that attracts an ever-increasing number of parents and professionals who were 'defectologists' at preschool institutions and general schools in different parts of the country?

According to the ideology of the Laboratory of Work Continuity, the aim of bringing up hearing children and those with a hearing loss is the 'normalization' of their lives, irrespective of the place and conditions of residence and education.

The 'normalization of life' depends first and foremost on the preservation of the family. In this country, the overwhelming majority of State institutions for children with severe hearing losses and impairment are residential, even for the youngest children, and more often than not they are situated hundreds of kilometres from where the parents live.

Our 'method' gives parents a chance to bring up their children within the family, at home, at the same time, fostering the children's development flexibly, including providing them with opportunities to learn to speak. This 'natural' organization of children's lives preserves family ties and the links between generations; it helps children carry on family traditions; gives individual children a constant feeling of being loved and benignly treated by everyone around them; assists children in acquiring not a standardized language (as in special institutions) but a live, 'normal' language, personalised within the family. Individual children with a hearing impairment find themselves in the midst of normally hearing children of different ages, and it is among them that definite rules of behaviour are learned, play and businesslike contacts with them are established, and the gradual beginnings of verbal communication with peers are achieved.

The 'normalization' of life presupposes that children with severe hearing difficulties will be provided with conditions that will permit them to develop according to the same laws which govern the psychological development of children who have no such hearing pathology. One of the *conditio sine qua non* is the early provision of a personal hearing aid and its constant use.

In the course of three to five years, specialists create a verbal medium in groups and classes. This medium itself then serves as a source of speech development for children who were previously unable to speak when they joined the (speaking) children's company.

The following criteria can be used to assess the developmental progress of children, whether or not they have a hearing loss:-

- they feel at ease in unfamiliar circumstances;
- they are unconstrained, open to contacts not only with familiar people, but also with strangers;
- their verbal communication is expressive and well-intoned;
- they demonstrate interest in work being done, and in partners with whom they undertake it.

In building up the verbal environment, the principle underpinning our practice is that children themselves take the initiative - in choosing their partners in verbal communication, as well as the ways and means of solving any practical task set by an adult or another child/children. The role of adults is to help the children put their initiative into practice without forcing their own adult intentions on them. By acting jointly with them, the adult shows children the different forms of addressing each other, and acquaints them with contextually justified verbal exemplars that help children carry out their own intentions in accordance with the norms of social and verbal behaviour. In preschool and early primary phase classes, children learn to speak correctly and fluently, not following the rules of formal grammar, but in the process of active communication, on the basis of perception through hearing and vision, as well as that of reading. Children with severe and mild hearing difficulties are taught to read and write at the age of three or four.

From the very outset of a directed education following our 'method', adults introduce even the very youngest children to the world of fantasy and imagination. As a result of their lives being organized in this way, the children acquire the image of communicating people. This is a 'must' in the education process for developing the ability to hear oral speech in children with a hearing loss. The fact that they learn to talk and communicate with hearing people around them - no matter of what age - in its turn ensures the development of the social nature of life for people with impaired hearing. That is why children completely adapt themselves to the conditions of life in society, and independently establish all the contacts necessary in their 'business' and family life.

The results of our years dedicated to this work are in evidence in the lives of numerous children. For example, many children freely and

independently, without the help of interpreters, study in ordinary classes of general, specialized secondary and higher schools, and work successfully with people who hear normally. It is of utmost importance that our pupils are socially active in their collectives, and that they participate in cultural and public life. Very often, children with a hearing loss help classmates who are able to hear in their studies. Many of our pupils become involved in artistic activities and sport, attend hobby groups for painting, dancing, drama, calisthenics, tennis, swimming, etc. An ever-increasing number of children with severe and mild hearing losses study music, becoming proficient in the full programme of music schools, though at a slower rate than other students; they play the piano, flute, violin, learn solfeggio, and so on. Quite a few learn not one, but two, or even three, languages, that is, Russian, the language of the country in which they live, and a foreign one.

Those of our pupils who have grown up are generally married, some to partners with a hearing loss, others to normally hearing partners. Many already have children of their own. Our pupils find the existence of a division of human beings into categories - those who can hear and those who cannot - strange. As a rule they never feel the obligation to use, or need, special sign language. Their oral speech is fully understandable to others with a hearing loss, as well as by those who can hear. They do not set people with a hearing loss apart from the general system of communication accepted in society.

The many years of practical education and upbringing of children with various conditions of hearing sensitivity permit us to assert the justice embedded in the idea that the rules and patterns of cognitive and verbal development in normally hearing people and those with a hearing loss, however severe, are identical. This is our Laboratory's theoretical concept, and the 'normalization' of the life and social communication of children is the practical result of our work.

THE SUBCULTURE OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN AND MAKE-BELIEVE PLAY

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The life and activities of children in kindergarten proceed under the guidance of an adult who sets the accepted standards and actual conduct of behaviour, and also within the framework of the children's own 'society', which functions on the basis of play and interaction with each other.

It is generally known that by the time children turn five years of age, comparatively autonomous 'associations' form among them, with their own rules of behaviour, play traditions, folklore, and particular value orientation. All this permits us to speak of the existence of a specific childhood subculture, already present at the preschool stage.

Our studies show that the children's subculture takes shape under the influence of various factors. First and foremost these factors include the experience gained through life within the family (especially if a child has older brothers or sisters); that acquired from other children in the back yard or nearest neighbourhood; and from the mass media. The very last among these factors is the impact of kindergarten teachers.

It is commonly recognised that interaction with peers plays a significant role in the child's emotional, volitional and moral development. An analysis of actual proceedings, however, reveals that in preschool, 'associations' may function in such a way that they do not further the children's development. Sometimes socially unacceptable value orientation or types of children's interrelations may be adopted. Further, the norms and ways of functioning that form in children's 'associations' are extremely stable. Thus, enriching the life of such 'associations' and over-riding socially negative behaviour patterns are difficult processes.

Our studies have proved that an effective method is the submergence (involvement) of an adult in the children's society, participating in their play as an equal partner who, in just the same way as the rest of the group members, can suggest rules and ways of behaving, thus influencing the

content of the children's lives and activities, and re-orienting them towards more acceptable forms of conduct.

It is well known that play is of the utmost significance for children's psychological development. Yet, observing children in public childcare facilities, we came to the conclusion that the development of play is extremely variable, and depends on diverse social influences - for example, the nature of communication with adults, the existing traditions relating to play. As play is not accorded a prominent place in the lives of children in kindergartens, and, as a result, has not reached a really high level (in terms of time or complexity), it cannot be expected that its developmental function is being fully exploited.

Such a situation obliges us to raise the question of the necessity of specially shaping children's play. To be more precise, the questions are: what must an adult do to move play to a higher level? and, how should this be done?

Children's play has two aspects: first, it is a means, historically devised by society, of helping children acquire proficiency in the elements of their culture (a means children must first acquire in itself); secondly, it is a specific, independent activity that helps children not only appropriate society's experience, but also express themselves in this world of ours. In this connection, the shaping of play must take account of both the objective structure of play activity and its contextual relevance, according to specific features of the children involved (the level of cognitive development, motivation, range of interests).

The study of the structure of play activity and the peculiarities of children's proficiency in it, permitted us to propose a differentiated process in the shaping of play. We picture it as a series of stages in which gradually more and more complex modus operandi of play activity are passed on to children. The form in which they are passed on is also determined.

Since the cognitive abilities of preschool children in the early stage (2-3 years) compared with those at a later stage (6-7 years) differ significantly, the process of shaping play is broken up into a number of consecutive stages:- a) shaping of a 'conditional object-cum-play' activity (with toys, or other representational objects) as a way of building up a game; b) shaping of role play (functionally distributed role interaction, role dialogue, change in role position); c) shaping of the process of thinking up plots (jointly thinking of the entire plot of a game, combinations, blending individual sketches).

The goal of purposefully shaping play can be addressed in group provision, when children at an early age find themselves in the society of their peers, and are obliged to establish contact with each other. Therefore, it is expedient to attend to the shaping of play from the very outset, as a joint activity (ie. to develop, in the children's repertoire, alongside conditional play actions, these increasingly complex modes of interaction.) In this, one is relying on the inclination to communicate with peers, which is usually in evidence in the very early stages of childhood.

A theoretical analysis and the experimental investigations we conducted gave us grounds for defining three principles in shaping play:-
- an adult joins children's play as a full partner;
- play skills and the methods of interaction are acquired simultaneously;
- the educational efforts are directed at organizing the different ways of developing play (play action, role play, combining elements of plots) at different age levels, but retaining the integral, meaningful context of the game - its plot.

In accordance with these principles, we worked out, through action research, modes of shaping play at various levels. When an adult makes use of an integral plot in a joint game, he or she singles out for the child, as though in 'pure' form:
- the conditional object actions, by offering toys, objects replacing them, or imaginary objects (at the earlier ages);
- role actions, by emphasising the meaningful links between roles, changing role position, employing role dialogue, and, as a result, organizing the children's role interaction (at the younger and middle preschool ages);
- actions involving the invention of plots, by coordinating, and combining the individual plot sketches in the course of transforming well-known scenarios (at the older preschool ages).

The effectiveness of achieving proficiency in a new mode is reached by rejecting altogether, or narrowing down to a minimum, the mode learnt in an earlier stage of shaping play. Thus the child singles out and comprehends his or her role behaviour as a new mode of playing when the adult, for example, organizes the game using a small number of toys, which reduces the possibility of object-play. The singling out and comprehension of actions involved in inventing a plot takes place when the adult transforms the game into a verbal one, which excludes object play and role actions. When switching over from a forming situation (joint play with an adult) to independent play, the new mode learnt by the child seems to 'absorb' the preceding one, and the play continues holistically.

If children become proficient in the modes of play activity stage by stage, they have opportunities to play independently at all ages with the framework of the modes in which they have become skilful. Children's independent play at each stage of formation guarantees their self-development in the course of this play, and towards the older preschool age, this independent play becomes the basis of the functioning of the children's society.

Thus within the integral educational process, we deal with play as a joint activity of adults and children (in which the modes of building up play are passed on to the latter) and as children's independent play. In other words, the pedagogical process, with respect to play, is achieved through these two phases at every level of the entire preschool period.

This proposed pedagogical approach permits the adult to gradually develop the complexity of both the structural and thematic aspects of children's play, without breaking the logical chain of its development. It also permits the adult to participate smoothly in the building up of play traditions, thus influencing the subculture of the children's group.

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THE ROLE OF ADULTS IN CHILDREN'S PLAY

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The societies which represent the highest developmental level of material and spiritual culture are nowadays maintained, and can develop, only if they have a highly qualified workforce. Such high levels of education in adulthood depend upon a relatively long preparation of the young, on average 18 years. The fact that the period of childhood has been considerably extended in comparison with the past brings with it significant problems, for which no easy solutions are available.

In our opinion, one of the causes of these problems lies in the fact that the life of children is more and more separate from that of adults. This is evident from a comparative point of view, for instance, when one considers the coexistence of generations in primitive societies. Owing to the fact that most adult activity is currently inaccessible to children, because of the way work is organized, parents and children have few opportunities for cooperation and, for this reason, they live beside one another, rather than together. Moreover, children are considered as beings who are subordinate to adults. In this way, one of children's central wishes, that is, to share the life of adults as equal partners, is frustrated.

In Czechoslovakia, the conditions have been created for children to be educated at home by their mothers for the first two years of life, and eventually this period will be even longer. The level of this family education is not, however, supported to such an extent that all children can be assured a life free from exposure to deprivation and the frustration of their needs.

Children of preschool age are often entrusted to the care of nursery schools for a considerable part of the day. Older children spend many hours at school and in the day nursery. Under these circumstances, many parents have no opportunities, and some no interest, in spending more time with their children. Thus they run the risk that they will gradually lose their influence on their children because emotional ties will be weakened; children may then look for compensation elsewhere, among their peers, or in gangs which can exert a negative influence on them. Meanwhile, the differences in life-style between adults and children, and the difficulties arising from these, will not have been overcome.

The development of parents' and children's common activity is considered to be one way to balance and deepen the relationships between generations in a family. Since play is children's earliest activity from the viewpoint of development, let us focus our attention on the role of adults in children's play.

Research surveys have shown that under certain circumstances the participation of adults can exert positive effects not only on children's play itself, but on overall development. Sutton-Smith in *Play and Learning* 1979, (New York, Gardner Press) suggests that adults' occasional participation in children's play always has a tremendous effect on children's playfulness. He adds that the main effect probably lies in the fact that adult participation (if they are truly involved as an equal partner) can be the source of great satisfaction to the child. But in what ways does the adult intervene to contribute to the child's satisfaction during play?

It is certainly a good thing if the adult creates favourable conditions for children's play, provides them with toys and /or helps them at their play, becomes involved tactfully and leaves again inconspicuously, and so on. The most important thing, however, is to find a way of approaching children so that they have, as often as possible, opportunities to participate in interesting activities jointly with adults with whom they feel they are equivalent partners. This means that the course of play should convince children that both the adult(s) and children involved are concerned with something in the given situation, that they are fully absorbed by it, and that the play is important to them.

Real cooperation based on equivalent child-adult relations could be a guarantee for play's favourable developmental effects on the child. These effects would include the development of positive relationships with parents, or other adults, and the formation of positive attitudes, social skills and inclinations in children.

Furthermore, these cooperative experiences could contribute to -

a) the formation of an optimistic attitude to the world, sound self-confidence and the ability to act independently;
b) a successful socialization process, in part the result of role-modelling by the persons with whom the child has positive relationships;
c) the development of varied skills, knowledge, talents and abilities, needs, attitudes and characteristics.

By what means is it possible to contribute to the development of parents' and children's common play activities, so that all participants may achieve satisfaction?

There are several possibilities which offer themselves in this respect.

1. At present there are efforts to maintain and revive traditional children's games in different countries and in international organizations (eg.OMEP). These efforts proceed from the fact that the traditions of nations and ethnic groups include children's games, because these retain constant cultural and educational value. They are important for the maintenance of national identity, nowadays frequently endangered, especially in the case of migrating populations. One type of traditional play is that entered into by an adult and a little child, for the purpose of amusement and to promote cheerfulness. In such a situation, the adult stimulates the child, while at the same time the activities involved contribute to motor, cognitive and social development.

2. The playground provides support for children's games and the opportunity to stay in the open air. One of the present trends in the construction of playgrounds is that they are equipped as areas for play for children of different age-groups. Further, they offer certain special-interest activities for parents' and children's common use during leisure time (for instance, in Lahti in Finland).

While the construction of playgrounds has a long-standing tradition, and they can be found in great numbers in many countries, a new institution, the toy library, which aims to support children's play, has also been developed. The toy library is a cultural-educational facility: from which children can borrow toys; where they can play - alone or with their friends; and which they can come and visit independently, or with their parents. The latter can receive professional advice concerning suitable toys for their child. Different types of toy libraries serve different purposes and contexts. Frequently a toy library is associated with a public library, which operates in the locality. In some countries there are mobile toy libraries (for example, in Germany and Belgium), which, besides providing a lending service, mount exhibitions of toys, and these are attended jointly by parents and children. Some toy libraries have also been established in hospitals and institutions for children requiring special care. These toy libraries concentrate on providing specialized toys designed to alleviate, and foster adjustment to, different conditions and learning difficulties. In addition to lending toys, the libraries also organize 'open-days' for doctors, nurses, teachers, and parents of children with disabilities. A toy library is a practical facility for both the children and the parents. They provide children with opportunities to borrow toys which are needed for a short time only, or which are expensive. Thus,

there are advantages in terms of costs, as well as solving the longer-term problems of storage in homes with limited space.

3. The current conception of parent education stresses the fact that in parent-child interactions a relation of partnership should be established right at the beginning of each child's life. In earlier days a 'good parent' was one who provided a child with the best possible care, aimed at promoting physical and emotional development. Nowadays, a 'good parent' tends to be perceived as a person who is able not only to give to a child, but also one who receives from that child, from the first moment of life. We note that relationships which allow for interchange of this nature bring joy to children and support developmental progress. Parents need help so that they might solve educational problems appropriately. They need help - in developing their ability to observe their child; in being able to recognise the child's achievements and special needs; and in developing their understanding. If they do understand their child really well, what needs to be done in given situations, even stressful ones, and in what ways solutions can be found, will become apparent from the child's behaviour. Additionally, adult-child relationships based on partnership create the foundations for later stages of education.

The practice of family education is at present influenced by traditions handed on from generation to generation, by information contained in publications or disseminated by the mass media, or by different forms of concrete aid aimed at raising parents' levels of pedagogical knowledge and skills. Recently, in western countries, musical circles have been developed for mothers and children, starting when their children are infants. Lessons in which children can hear songs and music, take part in music-making groups, learn about children's musical instruments and musical toys, and so on, are provided under the leadership of qualified music teachers. For their mothers, these circles offer a course of instruction enabling them to practice musical education in the family.

In Czechoslovakia, parents' exercises with children represent a popular and tried activity. Adults (parents or grandparents) attend regular physical activity sessions and perform exercises jointly with children, starting at the age of two years, in a playful form, as well as the more organized sports and games.

The activities described in this paper accord with Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which recognizes *the right of children to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities.*

THE INDIVIDUAL, ETHNIC AND UNIVERSAL IN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTENT OF TRADITIONAL (FOLK) GAMES AND TOYS

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We study traditional (folk) play from the standpoint of the general psychological theory of play as an activity. The study of the intellectual structure of children's play at an early and preschool age permits us to define play as a cognitive activity, one which is extremely important for shaping in a child a mental image of the world. Play guides children's concrete actions and behaviour patterns in everyday life.

The enigma of play lies in its indefinite quality within the range of psychological phenomena. According to Jerome Bruner, play is the testing ground for ways of blending thinking, speech, and imagination organically. This prominent scholar stresses the social, public nature of individual play - the collective activity in a group situation, he notes, acts as a type of model for the free play of a child when left alone.

Most of the investigators of children's play mark its connection with children's intellectual development, with their thinking (see for example, the work of Mendzheritskaya, Leontyev, and Zaporozhets' team). According to the theories of Jean Piaget, the symbolic function of thinking takes shape in the process of playing.

We made use of the method of psychological analysis first advanced by L. S. Vygotsky. In other words, we paid attention to the development of play: in phylogenesis (the play of animals, especially primates); in anthropogenesis (reconstructing children's play at various stages in human history); in the period of the historic formation of human society (games recorded in the cultural history of different nations and modern folk games); and in the ontogenesis of present-day children (children playing at home, in kindergartens).

The extensive data collected in the course of employing this method by my colleagues and myself permitted us to develop a new view of play,

its nature and psychological function, its significance in human psychological development.

We analysed the data on the basis of a special unit of analysis - the play problem and the means by which it is solved. We ascertained that a 'play problem' was a structural unit of games. Every game can be represented as a network of interlinked play problems, which a child solves by means of play action with varying levels of generalization. The means of play action are, at one and the same time, both an indicator of the content of generalized activity and an indicator of the level of its generalization, and a carrier of its symbolic form. Play actions can be represented in the form of actions with a toy or with an object taking its place, or actions with an imaginary object; or actions designated by an expressive gesture and, finally, through words/language as symbols.

Though play actions continue to deal with objects, they may also have a specifically emotional complexion, reflecting the definite content of the children's interactions while playing. In the more developed play of older preschool children, play action is often verbalized - the players exchange remarks according to their roles or carry on a content-full conversation. The objects used in the game, as well as the actions and words, acquire the function of signs or symbols, and at the same time, support the playing child's thought. A correctly generalized children's toy is an ideal symbol in play.

Play is one of the most complex psychological phenomena in a child's life. How does it originate? L.S.Vygotsky stated that the origin of play is the necessity to resolve the contradictions between the child's desire to act as an adult, and his or her inability to take part in adult life due to age and immaturity. So children effect this unrealized desire of theirs through play. Such a psychological mechanism is, undoubtedly, inherent only in human beings, and is specific to the entire history of human childhood. And yet, the function of play in children's lives is not limited to carrying unrealized desires to fruition.

A comparison of all the materials we have at our disposal and their theoretical interpretation bring us to the conclusion that play is not only a reflection (reproduction in symbolic form) of the life of grown-ups, but also the psychological mechanism by which life is comprehended - its metacognition. In this context, play is the practical manifestation of a child's mediation on reality. More than that, play is a special form of the child's theoretical thought. What takes place during play is not simply practical thinking in action, as, for instance, in the case when a child discovers that with a scoop s/he can extract a fish from the aquarium, or

that a screw can be tightened with the help of a screwdriver, but thinking on a higher level than mere practice. When playing, a child deals not with reality, but with its image, that is, the child's own mental image of the world, formed as a result of practical actions. This mental image is contradictory and dynamic, it is problematic, though in some way also substantial and axiomatic; it is generalized and complemented by hypotheses, and this makes it, to some extent, an imaginary, rather than real, image of the world. Thus, the image has at one and the same time, a fantastic and realistic quality. This wonderful property of children's images of the world is the foundation for the development of creativity, the first manifestations of which reveal themselves in the play of preschool children. In the process of playing, the image of the world is externalized into an activity plan, and is investigated in children's individual and joint games. The symbolic nature of the image and its manipulation during play makes it a part of children's play dialogue.

In the life of a child, individual and joint play is a very special learning process linked with the development of theoretical, reflective thinking and the ability to generalize. This quality of play appears to be a universal phenomenon, a phenomenon common to all human civilization. An analysis of the material evidence of the life style of primitive peoples of the Shell and Mustarsk cultures shows that in those distant millenia children's play could have already been based on a symbolic means of expression. Primitive games with pebbles, children's imitative actions, were not only a reflection of the adults' activities, but could be taken by the latter as a sort of magic cause of their successes or failures in practical affairs. Children's play could possibly have been the source of primitive heathen rituals which, in their turn, first tabooed it and later enriched it with a new content, turning it into traditional play.

Ritualized content of the first archaic folk games conveyed to children the concept of life in human society. Archaic games, initiated aeons ago, long before the birth of ancient and medieval civilizations, have been preserved to this day in the play repertoire of children of many nations varying greatly in succeeding ethnic and cultural traditions. For instance, games with marbles or pebbles are played practically all over the world. The psychological content of these games, as my joint study with M.A.Norbasheva, of Uzbekistan, showed, makes them a universal means of shaping common human traits, such as sensorimotor coordination, arbitrary actions, symbolic thinking, attention and memory. The studies of Cris-Montenegre, carried out in Columbia, revealed that the games of

children of the Arawak people develop in them the qualities of thinking and social adaptation needed in contemporary society.

The development of human qualities - thinking, motivation, and cultural engagement - is universally present in archaic folk games. This universal element in traditional play is always passed on to the child in a particular, at times unique, ethnic 'wrapping'. Ethnic features overlay and interpret universal elements common to humankind, through communal, family, and national specialization. Ethnic features enrich play, by providing a reflection of the nation's, or group's, historic experience. In play the ethnic features are not only historical but contemporary too.

Modern folk games pass on to children the traditions that are peculiar to the ethnic and aesthetic characteristics and consciousness of the people among whom they grow and develop.

Our interest in and respect for the games of children of the various people inhabiting the world are so great precisely because they can enrich the general human culture of education, which is addressed, first and foremost, to every individual child.

Why is it that we link the psychological content of traditional games with what is individual in a child? The answer to this question lies in the nature of play, in its function involving the entirety of the child's psychological development. Traditional games, just as any other type of play, are a practical form of reflection on the world at large. Traditional play is that normative image of the world which humans pass on to their children as common cultural and ethnic heritage, with which they, in their turn, experiment, reproducing and transforming it in their own activity. Thus, traditional games become the foundation upon which each individual human personality is built, but the uniqueness of each personality is based on the universality of human understanding.

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TRADITION AND THE CHILD:

HOW POLISH VILLAGE CHILDREN USED TO PLAY

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In 1985 OMEP initiated the collection of traditional children's games. It is important we study such games before they are ousted by modern ones. The first preliminary study project was designed by Ivic in 1986. In Poland, empirical research began in 1989, first in the south-eastern parts of the country. The study was conducted by means of interviews with women of two generations, those born in the 1920s and those born in the 1950s. Women were selected rather than men on the assumption that they were more likely to be in tune with topics relating to the upbringing and development of children.

This is currently the case in most cultural/national groups. The study of two different generations of women makes it possible to see changes in traditional games due to social change. Our interviews were concerned with the following points: types of children's games; toys used; time, place and frequency of play; course of play; mode of transmission of games; informants' views on the importance of play in a child's life. Our informants spoke readily about the games of their own childhood. The interviews were conducted by female students of pedagogy during 1989-1990. We tape-recorded a total of forty interviews with country women who had no more than elementary education.

The dominant type of play in the pre-war period involved movement games (80 per cent), often accompanied by songs, as in the games known under the names of "Nikita" ("Thread") and "Kot i mysz" ("Cat and mouse"). There also were movement games with a ball.

The games were most commonly played in large open-air spaces: in a garden, a farmyard or a clearing in the forest. Role-playing games, such as the forester game, were less frequently remembered. Construction games were mentioned only sporadically and were described as 'messing about' with mud or clay.

In the 1950s, movement games, such as tag and treasure-hunt continued to enjoy the greatest popularity (55%). Some were

accompanied by singing. At this stage, however, there was more variety in children's play, with second place taken by role-playing (25%) which reproduced adult activities. Most often these involved the jobs of shop-assistant, hair-dresser, seamstress and teacher. Didactic games which presupposed certain skills, (e.g. writing) were also quite frequently reported. The informants sporadically mentioned construction games. All those interviewed found greatest pleasure in remembering movement games, which remain for them to this day a symbol of a care-free and happy life. They spoke with regret about the disappearance of many of these, formerly so popular, games. We do not hear the singing of crowds of children at play any more; compared with TV watching or playing with mechanical or construction toys, movement games hold no attraction for the modern child. In addition, the decrease in number of children in the family and the large amount of extra curricular activities organized by parents (physical training, music, religion, foreign language classes) are inimical to outdoor group play. The type and nature of play have changed. Our informants said that on the one hand the games of their own childhood had been more joyful, the children more open and spontaneous, and that today's games were monotonous, sad and imitative of models provided by institutions or the media; while on the other hand they expressed admiration for the attractiveness of modern toys, which are quite unlike those they had used.

The toys used in childhood play by the two generations in the study were different. Before World War II toys were mainly made by the children themselves or by adults in the family (70%). They were rag dolls, rag balls, tiny sacks of grain, cow's hair balls and wooden toys such as prams, scooters, whistles and sledges. Various materials and utensils were also used. Aided by children's imagination, which is boundless, unstructured materials (sand, clay, sticks, feathers, pine cones) turned into the most wonderful toys. Such toys cannot be replaced by even the best designed mass-produced toy. Children were only occasionally given toys made by village craftsmen and bought in the market. Wooden toys modelled on traditional designs are still being made and can be bought in markets; but they are more attractive to ethnographers, sociologists and museologists than to children. Two examples of such toys are 'a smith with a bear' and 'merry-go-round with red ponies'.

In the 1950s children were mostly given commercially produced toys to play with, such as rubber balls, teddy bears, skipping ropes, puzzles. Home-made toys were remembered less frequently. However, not all commercial toys were freely available for play: some (e.g. dolls) served

as decorations and children were allowed to handle them only on rare occasions. You had to be careful with toys bought with money, so children would often play with household utensils or home-made toys.

In the 1920s children of various ages participated together in games. Older children would bring younger ones whom they looked after; as one of the women said, 'I was supposed to look after him, but I played a little, too'. Games were therefore usually played in large groups of ten or more children. In the words of another informant, 'no matter how many of us there were, we could all play together'.

In the 1950s the groups of children playing were more homogeneous with regard to age. Pre-school children were more often looked after by parents, and adolescents no longer wanted to play with younger children. Play groups were more often small, which was due to a decrease in family size and to parent imposed restrictions on contacts with other children. In the earlier generation, then, all those who had the time and the wish to play were able to join in the game, and there was no special co-opting process. However, the selection of participants, depending on type of game (construction, didactic) and thus on skills and knowledge, appears in a very pronounced form during the 1950s.

In both periods children could be seen playing in farmyards, near the farm buildings. It was very infrequent for children to play either far from home or indoors. By contrast, modern children spend less time playing outdoors and play at home more. This is predicated by the type of game (construction, perception) and the toys in use. Children like to play outdoor games in locations where they can be free from control by adults, not only in areas suitable for that purpose. Children play in small groups. There are no circle games with singing, even though when asked children report that they know them (e.g. 'Ojciec Wergiliusz' - 'Old Father Virgil'; 'Budujemy mosty', a game similar to 'London Bridge').

In the 1920s children played mainly on weekdays. 'On Sunday I was dressed up nicely and had to be careful not to soil my clothes', remembers one of the informants. Games were usually organized in the evening, when all the household chores had been done. Children were seen playing more often in spring and summer, less frequently in late autumn or winter when warm clothes were needed - and children often did not have those. The games continued for many hours and could be repeated many times. This made it easier to register and remember the activities characteristic to particular games.

In the 1950s, children played every day and had more time to do so because they were assigned fewer household duties. There are intergenerational differences, too, as regards the mode of transmission of

games. The 1920 children learned from their older friends simply through participating in games. This mode of transmission was less frequent in the 1950s, when children tended to play in small and agewise homogeneous groups. They could still learn from the older generations - from their mothers and grandmothers. Institutions such as kindergarten and school played a more important role in the transmission of games at this stage. Our informants believe that parents nowadays spend less time being with and talking to their children and so create no opportunity for an area of common experience to arise which might be filled by tales, songs and games known to both parents and children. In the old days adults included children in housework and ritual as a matter of course. Modern parents, if they spend any time with their children at all, do so usually to supervise school work or check knowledge, rather than to establish contact or simply be together.

There are clear differences in the way that the two generations view the functions of play. The older generation regards play first of all as a means of gratification: playing gives the child pleasure and joy. Second in order of importance is the developmental and formative function: by giving pleasure, play fosters development.

Our interviewees of the younger generation put the didactic and educational function of play in the first place. In their opinion, play prepares one for life, for adult roles, and teaches self-dependence. The stress on the didactic and educational function has contributed to the suppression of the spirit of play and the conversion of play into preparatory exercises, e.g. for reading, writing or counting.

To sum up, our study has shown certain changes in traditional children's games between the 1920s and the 1950s.

There is a marked restriction of possibilities for natural transmission of traditional games, firstly because games are played in smaller groups and secondly because children are no longer included in the occupations and rituals of adults. At the end of the 20th century we can observe conscious efforts to sustain traditions, especially in families where the parents have experienced higher education.

Play has become increasingly specialized, and has therefore required appropriate equipment. Commercially produced toys have ousted adult-made or child-made toys.

The function of play has changed. From a gratifying activity that also fostered the child's development, play has changed into a preparatory didactic and educational activity.

Natural spaces around buildings, favourable to free group games, have been replaced by specially designed playgrounds, which usually

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stand empty and are environments of little potential for stimulating a child's activity.

Movement games, which are marked for their freedom and spontaneity and can be played by any number of children, have been superseded by didactic or computer games or by TV watching.

Institutionalization has also affected children's play. It is institutions, rather than older generations, that transmit what they regard as the values of use to the young.

In the light of these observations, it is worth looking for ways to preserve traditional games. As Huizinga put it in 1949:

> *In culture we find play as a given magnitude existing before culture itself, accompanying it and pervading it from the earliest beginnings.*

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE NATIONAL KINDERGARTEN IN THE UKRAINE

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The democratization of state activities and public life in the Ukraine call for the reorientation of preschool education in line with the modern tendencies of the spiritual, economic and national development of the country.

More than 100 nationalities live on the territory of sovereign Ukraine, and there is currently a revival of the national cultures of the people of the Ukraine. In the past few years, early childhood educators have been engaged in a search for the forms, content and methods of bringing the culture of their native nation within reach of the children. It became necessary to articulate the theoretical basis and methodology for national preschool education within the family and in preschool institutions.

National cultures form the foundation of universal culture. It follows from this that giving children access to the life-enhancing sources of the history, traditions, and customs of their land, parents and teachers lead them into the world of values common to humanity as a whole.

The revival of Ukraine's sovereignty provides opportunities for the establishment of preschool institutions which would make use of the achievements of ethnic pedagogics and of world pedagogical thinking in accordance with national educational traditions and national customs.

The foundations for the spiritual and physical formation of the personality are laid within the family. Jointly with public preschool education, the family provides for the child's comprehensive development.

Through education every nation perpetuates itself in its children, generates its national spirit, character, psychology, traditions, culture and its way of life. For this reason, it is natural for every civilized nation to have its own national kindergarten.

That kindergarten can be considered national if it provides for the 'ethnization' of the personality, i.e. the natural merging of a child with the spiritual world and traditional life of his or her people and with the culture of the nation as a part of world culture. The national kindergarten is created on the basis of the ideas of humanism and democracy, of the organic correlation of the folk and the national, of the preservation of national values and access to those common to all of mankind. It is oriented to the prospect of developing a modern personality.

In view of the above, we advance the following purposes, tasks and general conceptual approaches of Ukrainian kindergartens. These propositions of principle may serve as a basis for the creative utilization and revival in kindergartens of the cultures of all the nations inhabiting the Ukraine.

The aim of national preschool education is the formation of children's basic spirituality. Thus the tasks, or objectives, are as follows:-

- To foster children's spiritual growth, to develop this as the dominating feature in the structure of personality.
- To shape personality in the context of the native culture and language, as the child's emotional environment, according to his or her ethnopsychology.
- To restore the prestige of the Ukrainian language as a means of socialization - the mother tongue of the children who speak and study it as the state language of sovereign Ukraine, the language of the indigenous nation.
- To teach preschool children to use the native language in lively spontaneous contacts with the people around them; to form their verbal thinking and their oral speech; to foster a respectful attitude towards dialects in the context of routine and artistic styles; to help children utilize means such as phonetics, lexicology, word creation and phraseology effectively.
- To shape creative personalities who respect the national and who are developed in ways appropriate for today's society; who live active, interesting lives according to age, and social and physiological requirements; and who are physically and mentally prepared to comply with the further demands of school.
- To inculcate selflessness in children as the supreme value on the scale of cultural values, and simultaneously teach them elements of economic information and efficiency.

The key pointers to the achievement of these tasks are:-

- the formation of a harmoniously growing personality, endowed with national consciousness, dignity and a yearning to preserve and expand national culture as an element of human culture as a whole;
- the absorption of such moral and ethical values as goodness, sensitivity, mercy, humanity, justice, truthfulness, conscientiousness, dignity, respect for people of all nationalities;
- the maximum adaptation to each child's nature, to his or her age, gender and individual characteristics, as well as to physiological, psychological, genetic and national distinctions;
- the preservation of the national psychology, genotype, which took shape in the course of centuries, in definite natural-geographical conditions as a sum total of the inherited psychological and physical structures which the nation passed on from generation to generation and which determined its national image;
- the achievement of proficiency in the native language as the most valuable treasure of the nation, sincere love for the home language as the first and mightiest spiritual mentor of a human being, as the most effectual and modern manifestation of national culture and history;
- support for the status of Ukrainian language as the state language, according to the acting Law on Language in the Ukraine;
- acquaintance with the history of the native nation as a source of spirituality and wisdom, of the continuity of generations, of the renaissance of national consciousness and pride, and the foundation for shaping a citizen of a sovereign state;
- study of geographic peculiarities and natural resources of the native country as a source of forming in a child the sense of motherland, of arousing an interest in its economy;
- cultivation of knowledge, awakening of aspirations and interest in learning and other work, and of a respectful attitude to sources of knowledge - sciences, books, etc.;
- differentiation of the educational process according to individual inclinations, abilities, talents, interests and requirements of each child, disclosing of talents, creation of the most favourable conditions for their development, personal self-expression and self-assertion;
- humanization and democratization of the educational process as a priority for the child's natural and free well-being in the

kindergarten, the desire to learn, to be active and full of initiative in contacts with other people and the environment;

- independence of the educational process from any partisan or religious trend;
- harmony of family and social education based on mutual respect and support, on truth and reality;
- status of social-pedagogical independence;
- conformity of the organization, structure and content of education to the progressive achievements of ethnopedagogics, of national, classical and world pedagogics.

These objectives are achieved through:-

- national psychology, culture, history;
- present-day achievements of culture and scientific or technical progress.

The introduction of national culture into the daily life of preschool children presupposes the understanding of and orientation to the psychology of the nation, which has developed throughout centuries. Ukranian national culture has, for a long time, been based on the tenets of democracy, humanism, conscience, honour and dignity, and a sense of beauty. That is why universal human values which are underpinned by these same principles are in accord with Ukranian culture. Thus, through our Ukranian national culture, the universal is brought in accessible forms, within the reach of preschool children.

A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO A KINDERGARTEN OF THE FUTURE: THE EXPERIENCE OF FINNISH-RUSSIAN 'KALINKA'

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Imminent integration is inevitable. Cultures, languages, traditions, sciences, people are nowadays much closer than even five years ago. But has Eastern Europe something to offer to the West, or are there only ideas and methods that must be accepted, thankfully, from our richer neighbours?

The proposal that a new Finnish-Russian kindergarten in Helsinki could be organized, in cooperation between the Institute for Preschool Education in Moscow and the Society for Supporting Finnish-Russian Schools in Helsinki, came from the Finnish side. It was put forward at the very moment when the Institute was discussing new approaches to preschool education and elaborating projects that could not be underwritten by any financial assistance.

The old Soviet kindergarten system and curriculum was the only possible solution in a totalitarian society. Based on the theory of activity of which we are proud, this educational provision was developing only the analytical side of any working processes, but unfortunately it remained at the level of supposition in those fields of human endeavour where something had to be accomplished. In most scientific investigations, construction and destruction are regarded as mirror images of each other, and there are thousands of scrupulously developed modes of teaching different subjects to children, while the personality as a whole is an amalgam of capacities.

What could be considered as a necessary step for a kindergarten to become a place where children are encouraged to be active in many ways, on the one hand, while the individuality of each character flourishes, on the other?

Kalinka is a very beautiful building, completed in the August of 1990. Eighty (80) children are admitted, ten Russians, ten from bilingual Finnish-Russian families, and the rest are Finns. Among the eighteen adults, seven are Russian, two are Chilean, and nine are Finns. Every day

one Finnish adult, one Russian, and one bilingual Finn works with each class of twenty children. Classes are grouped by age. There are also thematic working groups for different activities, planning the life of the whole house. These thematic groups are concerned with music, physical culture, theatre, literature, craft, art and nature study. There are also people responsible for preschool language classes, where children learn Russian (for Finns), and Finnish (for Russians). The main pedagogical and psycholinguistic principles in Kalinka are:

- the use of literature as sources for teaching ideas;
- the use of mother tongue;
- special teaching materials and variability of teaching methods for organizing the different aspects of the curriculum;
- the personality of each child as the starting point for the work and concerns of the adults;
- the mutual influence of teachers and children in planning activities and amusement;
- self-development of the teachers' community.

So, the biggest difference between the Finnish and Russian teachers consists of their background and past, but their present is the same. During the first and second years of operation of the kindergarten, numerous attempts to consolidate people of different nationalities working together into a viable creative association of colleagues, capable of self-initiated change and development were undertaken. They had to complete five questionnaires, and discuss the results of surveys; they had to learn each others' languages and plan the work of the age/thematic/language groups once a week; they had to think about differences between Finnish and Russian characters, and work with parents.

We had to analyse the outcomes of Finnish preschool teachers' and assistants' education, and that of Soviet colleagues, because they result in non-coincident philosophy and practice. A typical Finnish teacher is self-confident; goal-oriented; dependent on common opinion; tries to organize relations between children in the group; considers the wishes of children; maintains traditional Finnish educational methods, cherishing them as the best in the world. A typical Russian teacher is accustomed to following a prescribed plan, believing this to be optimal, but not questioning the need for this plan, nor its appropriateness for the present state of children and conditions of work. The Russian-trained educator is dependent on superiors; does not believe in written words; operates in a teacher-directed, rather than child-centred, manner; fosters competition among children. Being educated and trained in different types of societies, Finnish and Russian teachers are proud of their capacities, but not aware

of the substantial differences in their professional attitudes. We work with staff to develop their consciousness of this and endeavour to explain that superficial tasks must be rejected on both sides, in order to acquire a new position, one which is more progressive and humanistic, in line with the aims of team-work in the kindergarten. The search for a suitable solution is both our goal and the mode of its achievement.

Professional architects, engineers, artists, musicians, linguists, physicians and, of course, educated preschool teachers from both countries, devote their time to work with the children. Being a psycholinguist, I supervise the language and speech education in Kalinka. We must respect the development of home language and give special attention to bilingual children from mixed families. Taking account of the fact that the children are living in Finland, and they are therefore drawn into Finnish culture and civilization, we feel it is important to make them acquainted with the best patterns of Russian tradition as well. We are stimulating second language development through those democratic forms of self-involvement of children that stimulate their interest in Russian or Finnish languages and their trust in the adults, whom they begin to understand.

New ideas for physical education, art teaching and teacher training are already yielding results. Other areas of the curriculum are in the process of formulation.

The most interesting device is, perhaps, the use of the various rooms in the kindergarten, that are specially designated for different types of activities: library, kitchen, hall, dormitory, leisure room, dark room, and a room for sand and water play. Respect for the individual needs of all the children and attempting to guarantee a plausible routine and time-table for little-ones, as well as for adults, necessitates a well-formed team, where everybody takes responsibility for every child, type of activity, and room, in turns. If children want to sleep they can, but they also have a choice between quiet play, listening to a fairy tale, or soft music. If they have a day of art on Wednesday, they can do something with, or in parallel to, the artist, or ask to be given other art materials, if they are in a mood for modelling for example, or they may simply play. The most important thing is continuity of experience: to offer an idea, to work on it, to bring it to a conclusion, to involve the result of one kind of activity in other work and play. Everything and everybody is interdependent.

In this way, we are always ready to make reasonable changes in our work. Professional scholars and thoughtful practitioners coordinate their efforts in everyday work and on the level of interesting ideas. Surely this is a model for kindergartens of the future?

SECTION 1: CHILDHOOD AND SOCIETY

Part 2: Education for peace

BRINGING UP PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN THE SPIRIT OF PEACE

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A questionnaire devoted to the theme of *Bringing up preschool children in the spirit of peace* was sent out in September 1982 on the initiative of the Polish OMEP Committee. It was devised according to the problems set out by the OMEP International Programmes Commission. Seventeen OMEP member countries responded.

Although almost ten years have passed since then, during which the family of OMEP has been joined by new members, I would like to present you with a brief outline of the principal conclusions, so as to open a discussion and jointly try to find more concrete answers to the central questions:-how do we bring up preschool children in the spirit of peace? and how could we do this even better?

Results of our survey

1. In the process of bringing up preschool children in the spirit of peace, five main lines of educational influence were recommended:
- forming a positive and friendly attitude towards the surrounding world;
- developing children's independence and teaching them to interact with other people;
- bringing them up in a spirit of pluralism and preparing them for dialogue;
- fostering a sense of belonging to a nation;
- teaching them international solidarity.

2. The methods of preschool education should be based on mutual trust between the teacher and each child, on mutual goodwill and amiability. Children must not be more the beneficiaries and consumers of adults' love and concern, than able to help, to bring joy to others, too.

3. The main conditions facilitating the shaping of children's positive attitudes towards the world are:
- the organisation of a harmonious way of life, the formation of small groups that help establish interpersonal contacts both among children, and between them and a teacher;
- the organisation of sufficiently spacious accommodation to permit free movement all around, permit the creation of various 'microclimates', that are comfortably and cosily furnished, that give easy access to nature (the irreplaceable source of harmony), that are provided with adequate equipment for stimulating independence, experiments, and opportunities for the manifestation of one's personality.

4. Members of ecological movements call for teachers' broader participation in environmental protection with the aim of saving lives. In preschool institutions, also called kindergartens, the significance of direct contact with nature for the children's harmonious development, their physical and psychic health is especially visible.

5. The principal trend in present-day preschool pedagogy is to lead children to the perception of their own 'egos', to teach them to control their behaviour. Preschool institutions can, and must, be a school of peaceful co-existence and democratic cooperation, at the same time developing a personal responsibility for one's own behaviour, and for one's attitude to the social tasks carried out by the group for the common good.

6. Competition must not be allowed in preschool institutions because of aspects peculiar to the stage of development, and because of the negative results of rivalry among children - both for the winner (the sense of superiority) and for the loser (the feeling of envy, unfairness, even aggression).

The socially positive or negative nature of the influence 'child-leaders' may have depends on the degree to which their behaviour is founded on a longing for power, on different forms of exploiting weaker peers, or else is evoked by their organizational capacity, their inventiveness or friendly conduct.

7. The collected data contains a great many pedagogic and psychological proofs of the intolerance of coercion in bringing up a child. And yet, cases of cruelty towards children in kindergartens are not exceptional, just as in families. The most dangerous source of spreading

examples of violence and aggression is television, whose growing impact affects the children's world as well.

8. In preschool education a multiplicity of behaviour models is vital in order to ensure the right 'to be different'. One of the chief tasks is to provide opportunities which facilitate quests for new goals and new decisions, to provide the possibility for dialogue with a partner. To seek and to experiment - that is the principal privilege of childhood. An inventor should be a very special hero in kindergartens.

9. One of the main factors preventing the shaping of an aggressive attitude is the sense of security, of belonging to a social group - the family, friends, the local population, the nation - as well as affection for one's own geneology. There are no higher or lower cultures, and any assistance offered to minorities, that may lead to their assimilation, cannot be accepted. Every nation, retaining its own special character, at the same time enriches the treasure house of human values. The development of the sense of belonging to a nation must, however, be accompanied by a deepening feeling of common requirements, which leads to the rallying of the children's community of the entire world.

10. Taking into account the ease and flexibility of little children's language adaptation, it would be well to introduce systematic foreign language lessons in preschool institutions, and provide them with systematic instruction, didactic aids, and other inputs.

Conclusions

The results of the questionnaire described above permit us to set forth the chief values and characteristics which, according to the respondents, lead to peaceful interrelations among people:

a) love and respect for fellow human-beings, susceptibility, sincerity, affability, understanding - the ability to listen, to discuss and help those in trouble;

b) to be fair, to observe moral laws and stick to accepted principles, to courageously stand up against evil but, at the same time, avoid individual aggressive behaviour;

c) a sense of solidarity and responsibility towards others and for the sake of others.

EDUCATION FOR PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Trondheim, Norway

Introduction

To educate the young for peace, for international understanding, co-operation, non-violent conflict solving, with a respect for fundamental Human Rights, is a UNESCO Recommendation, stated in 1974. We think this education should begin at the preschool age, before the child has preconceived ideas and is easy to mould.

The Antecedents

'Education for peace' has been topic of several OMEP conferences since Quebec 1980. In relation to the International Year of Peace (1986), OMEP produced 4 documents:

1) *Preschool Education for Peace* University of Iowa, Iowa (1985).
2) *Grains de Paix* UNESCO, Paris (1985).
3) *Step by Step for Peace*, Stockholm (1986).
4) *Les Enfants et la Paix*, Sofia (1987).

Resolution 1986

The meeting in Sofia (1986) formulated a Recommendation asking OMEP to continue efforts in this field.

At the World Council Meeting in Jerusalem (1986), Resolution 6 on 'Education for Peace' was adopted. As co-ordinator of this project, I was asked to provide empirical information, using an open questionnaire, the previous approaches having been mainly theoretical.

The aim and content of the project

The project involved:

- collecting data and examples of applications of peace education;
- analysis of the material;
- editing a publication for the purpose of stimulating education for peace and spreading knowledge of appropriate methods of work.

The theoretical aspect - definitions of terms

What is peace? Peace means more than the absence of war. It implies a life without violence, injustice, inequality and oppression, regardless of sex, class or creed. Results of peace and conflict research indicate that the causes of war are found in structural conditions and in the absence of the meeting of fundamental needs: the need for security, welfare, freedom, identity, and care.

What is peace education? Education about peace is undertaken at the school level. Education for peace in the broad sense starts even before the child is born, and continues through childhood.

Peace is 'learnable'. Education for peace implies not only learning peaceful attitudes, but also learning to see and understand the causes of conflict, in home, peer-group, community, home country, in the world and in finding possible solutions to these conflicts. Children should therefore be taught:

- to respect the equality of all human beings and the human rights of others, regardless of colour, class, sex or creed;
- to respect and protect life;
- to show solidarity toward both their peer-group and children in the outer world;
- to see other ideals than those of violence and power;
- to maintain dialogue, with empathy and understanding of the other person;
- to solve conflicts by non-violent means;
- to cherish their own cultural heritage and respect other cultures;
- to be vigilant about prejudices.

Realization of the project

Phase I: April 1989 letters and questionnaires were sent to 48 active OMEP committees. 38 replied.

Phase II: 1990. the material received was translated and a preliminary analysis was undertaken.

Phase III: 1991-92. Detailed analysis of the collected data was carried out and a subsequent elaboration of the material was prepared for publication.

Financial support

Phase I: This was financed by the Norwegian OMEP committee and the Secretariat of OMEP.

Phases II and III: The Norwegian Committee of OMEP granted support for the completion and printing of an English publication (about 150 pages), and for distribution to all OMEP National Committees.

Evaluation of the responses

Analysis of the material reflects the cultural, religious, political, economic and educational diversity and complexity within the OMEP 'society'.

Nearly all respondents accepted the objectives of Peace Education defined above, but they lacked ideas for activities and facilities to implement them.

The information obtained is not sufficient to make specific comparisons, but has served as a basis for descriptive analysis.

The material is broadly classified under three subtitles:

1) The incorporation of Peace Education into existing programmes;
2) Projects and related activities;
3) Planned projects, new programmes.

Some responses give concrete examples of the practicing of peace education. Others describe it in more general terms as incorporated in their total programme. A few refer to planned projects and future new programmes.

The influence of mass media and war toys is also mentioned. Nearly all stress the importance of the home. The parents' attitudes are of vital importance.

Education to promote an influence on a child's development should be many-sided.

The objectives of peace education must be integrated into the whole day-care activity.

The choice and selection of activity ideas and examples are those influencing the development of the child's:

- thinking, awareness of peace and methods of achieving it;
- social awareness, care, co-operation and sharing;
- emotional life, empathy for others in the in-and-out group;
- moral life, responsibility for own actions;
- skills for solving conflicts peacefully;
- ecological awareness, respect for all life.

The activity ideas are divided into different themes, e.g.: 'children in other countries', 'Spring', 'Home and family', 'Christmas Time', 'Human Rights'. Each theme is presented with its educational objective, content, name and form of activity. Instructions are given for some of the activities.

Conclusion

Regardless of different approaches to this topic, the material shows that Peace Education is a matter of common interest to all OMEP member countries answering the questionnaire.

One may ask: 'Is a project on Peace Education relevant in the world today?'

I feel free to answer 'Yes, more than ever'. Political, economic and historic events have brought about great instability and insecurity. Education systems are in a melting pot. Old views and ideas are thrown overboard. New thinking has taken its place. Peace Education should be a vital element in this thinking.

EDUCATING YOUNG CHILDREN

FOR PEACE AND WORLD CITIZENSHIP

Bokko Tsuchiyama

The purpose of this paper is to report about theory, learning programmes and statistical evaluation of early childhood education for peace and world citizenship, which have been enacted in Kohituji Hoikuen daycare centre in Osaka, Japan, with 180 children aged from 0 to 6 years.

Basic principles

a) From birth to three years

It is very difficult for children of this age to understand war, peace and the world. Nevertheless, peace education must begin from a very early age of life, right after birth. The most essential for young children is the formation of a peace-loving personality, which is based on a feeling of security, through an indirect emotional approach, instead of imparting knowledge about war and peace. It is necessary to provide sufficient care to a newborn baby, so that he or she can establish a strong relationship of love and trust with parents.

b) From four to six years old

Children of this age level are strongly influenced by fighting and violence depicted on television. They enjoy playing with war toys, imitating the heroic characters shown in programmes. In order to avoid false concepts of hero images and stereotyped knowledge of war, it is necessary to teach children the evil of violence, killing, bombing, etc, by intelligent means. However, it is necessary to help children to learn about peace from their own experiences. Abuse and violence to a young child must be eliminated completely, and the rights of children must be protected.

c) School management

An atmosphere of peaceful human relationships must be created in school itself in order to develop a peace-loving personality in each child. A child is very sensitive to the human environment and is easily infected with evil tendencies of a social group in school. Institutionalization and bureaucratic control are eliminated as much as possible in order to

democratize school management. Peace, love and mutual trust provide an ethos in which school work may function harmoniously, in a spirit of sharing relationships, resulting in a highly effective education and social welfare system.

d) Child group organization

The recent tendency for smaller families with only one or two children is causing serious problems with the social development of preschool-age children. Children lack the opportunities to experience mixing with children of different ages in their life and play. This situation makes it difficult for children to develop a social consciousness of the 'brotherhood' of the human race.

Multi-age grouping is used for the purpose of social development. Every former classroom is converted into a 'home', which is a small group of children composed of two- to six-year olds. The name of each 'home' is the surname of the care-giving teacher in charge, so that each child can feel the intimacy of belonging to that family, and the teacher may treat the children as her, or his, own family members. In the 'home' each teacher is solely responsible for the full care of the children, and is free from instructional responsibility.

Both children and teacher learn to respect different age 'home-mates' and to cooperate with each other through their common experiences in the heterogeneous mode of life. The primary intention of the 'home' is not education, but we can see efficient, unintended educational results, because informal education takes place when younger children imitate older ones at various moments in daily life. In the 'home', children live together, enjoying free play, eating and taking afternoon naps. Older children help younger ones, developing their loving hearts, and, at the same time, eliminating competitive and despicable feelings among them.

Because infants from eight weeks to two-to-four years are left in the same-age groups, it is necessary to have an interchange programme between elder children and infants. Older children are taken to the infants' rooms (where the babies of 0-1 are cared for) twice every month to play with them and to help teachers with their care.

Although we have mixed-age *Learning Centres* for free choice activities, and *Classes* for children of the same age for developmental purposes, where they must engage in learning activities for about half-an-hour each day, all children spend most of their time in the 'home', which provides rather relaxed and enjoyable free time compared with the *Learning Centre and Class*. Here, it is necessary to form a closer teacher-

child relationship, and these are the real core of education. Learning methods are based on the principles of individuality and creativity.

2 Curriculum content

a) Global interests
The following are topics included in the curriculum:-
1) Skin colour. 2) Costume. 3) Languages. 4) Greetings. 5) Invitation of foreign guests to school. 6) Dolls of the world.

b) Knowing about foreign nations through daily experiences
1) Nations. 2) Exchange with foreign preschools. 3) Food of other nations at lunch-time. 4) Pictures of animals and environment.

c) Participation in foreign relief work
1) By story-telling, conversation, audio-visual aids, teachers tell children about starvation and death through lack of medicine. 2) Children make coin boxes in classroom activities. Teachers ask parents to let their children put small coins in the box every day at dinner-time. The children bring the coin boxes back at Christmas, to send them to foreign relief agencies. 3) Children bring used stamps to donate them for relief work. 4) Give and take Santa Claus...At the Christmas party, children bring boxes of food, clothes and medicines to Santa Claus, and ask him to take them to poor countries. 5) Each mother donates a cup of rice, and the preschool purchases it. All the children visit the bank to send the money for famine relief. At lunch-time, they make a rice gruel and eat it to experience the kind of meal starving people might have.

d) Knowing about the misery of war.
1) Children think about and discuss current wars and their victims. 2) On a summer evening, children and teachers make a big bonfire and they talk about the potential effects on people and houses. 3) Children's grandparents are invited to tell children about their war experiences. They think about the present happiness and peace. 4) Teachers read a pictorial storybook on *Pitiful Elephants* which were killed by hunger during World War II. Children visit their tomb in the City Zoo. When they return to the preschool, they write letters to the living elephants in the Zoo, wishing them a long life. 5) The children write short letters asking for war to be banished, and mail them to international peace conferences held in foreign countries.

3. Statistical evaluation of peace education and findings

The knowledge and moral judgement of 475 preschool children of four and five years old, on war and peace, were studied statistically from February 1 to 13, 1985, and compared as follows. The responses of one group of 375 children (Group A) who did not experience the peace education programme, were compared with those who did, 50 children identified as Group B. The investigation was undertaken through oral interviews with individuals, or a written questionnaire.

The results indicate that:-

1) Young children are gaining some knowledge of war from their daily life experiences, regardless of peace education. Damage, evil, and fearfulness, which are caused by war and bombing are recognized by more than 66 per cent of Group A, and by 96.4 per cent of Group B, among four-year-olds, and by more than 79.3 per cent of A Group and 95.5 per cent of B Group, among five-year-olds. The common concept that it is bad to have war, because people are killed and houses are burned, and bombing is a fearful thing because it kills both parents and oneself, is shared by 42.6 per cent of A Group, and by 89.3 per cent of B Group among four-year-olds, and by 65.8 per cent of roup A and 86.4 per cent of B Group, among five-year-olds.

2) Comparing four- and five-year-olds, we can recognise the development of the concept of war, because a child's realistic cognition of war is increased by age in both the A and the B Group.

3) In the answers of the A Group, to the question 'Are soldiers good men/bad men?', the four-year-olds respond thus - 39.9 (good) / 44.7 (bad) per cent, and the five year-olds - 52.7 (good) / 34.8 (bad) per cent. The reversal in these ratios is accounted for because many of the five-year-olds in A Group consider soldiers as protectors, repelling evil forces, and as people with courage and a sense of righteousness. However, this reversal is not evident in the results for Group B, indicating that they have been influenced by the Peace Education programme.

4) Comparing the overall results from the two groups, Group B demonstrated the effect of the programme in all areas of the study, for example, when questioned about war, the role of soldiers, the effects of bombing, relief work, the meaning of peace.

This project provided us with an understanding of the ways in which children can engage joyfully in activities for world peace and international welfare, and it has enabled us to recognise the possibility of extending altruism widely, to the global sphere.

SECTION 2: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Part 1: Programmes and models

PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING PRESCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

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Some basic principles underpin the variety of programmes in Russia's preschool institutions. Among the more important are: respect for children's development, personality and creativity. This is the most significant principle, and it correlates well with other principles, such as teaching which involves the active involvement of children, or relating the content of programmes to children's developmental needs.

In this paper I would like to suggest another principle, namely, that the content of a programme needs to incorporate those elements which are relevant to the child. This principle is sufficiently universal to be implemented in programmes of cognitive, moral and aesthetic education. In our research, children exhibited generalised abilities to regard objects and phenomena around them as things which they could change and move in various interconnections and interdependencies. Preschool children became capable of thinking what an object was like in the past and what it might be like in the near or far off future, for example: how its connections with other objects might change. These children were developing the capacity to predict future events. For example, a child could anticipate the simplest future changes in the environment, or in the field of social relationships. The capacity to predict develops intensively at the preschool age and plays a decisive role in the process of cognitive, moral and aesthetic development.

Children's ability to understand objects and phenomena in motion, transformation and development, and to use their understanding in their activities, promotes their versatile, active and developing minds. As a whole, these processes form the most mobile and developing part of children's individual experiences, which serve as the foundation for intellectual and artistic creativity. One of our programmes of cognitive

education laid stress on the development of creativity and supported children's developing abilities and personalities.

Such a programme reflects, for children, in a general and most easily understandable form, the objective contradictions in the content of moral, aesthetic and cognitive education. This helps to enrich, subjectively, the process of education and upbringing in kindergartens. In the course of moral education, emphasis is traditionally laid on acquiring and applying morals. It should be pointed out that to behave morally might mean not fulfilling the respective norm, and also to be able to violate it. This aspect of moral education is usually given little attention. A moral norm may be violated for the sake of higher moral values. For example: a child promises her mother not to touch a cake until she comes home, but breaks the promise and gives a piece of cake to a hungry child who calls at the door.

In a number of cases we simplify the process of upbringing, by impressing on children that morals and rules of behaviour are stable and should not be broken. However, in reality children are often obliged to break rules and go against certain moral codes because life forces them to do so. Children then start to understand the hierarchy of moral norms, and learning needed to make moral choices. They can then appreciate that if it becomes necessary to break a rule, it is important to see that this is itself a profoundly moral action. In this difficult situation our duty is to help the child.

It is common to talk of intellectually or artistically 'gifted' children but there is little consideration of the idea of a 'morally gifted' child. This needs some thought. Traditionally, 'artistic development' means acquiring knowledge about art, shaping ideas of beauty, and acquiring artistic skills. Simultaneously an opposite process is taking place - one of transforming rigidly fixed norms: stepping out of their framework into new, unknown fields: creating new norms and models of beauty.

The study of internal contradictions of children's cognitive activity enables us to devise new programmes of cognitive education for kindergartens. These programmes take into account children's entire cognitive sphere and stand out as the constant interaction of two opposite poles; the pole of firm, stable formations and the pole of mobile, unstable ones, which make the process of thinking highly flexible. Due to developing and flexible ideas, the internal variability of the cognitive sphere increases considerably, becoming more sensitive and able to reflect new objects and take in new knowledge.

The unstable and developing ideas are of special importance in activating children's thinking processes. If we want children to be active

throughout the whole process of education, we must build it up in such a way that alongside lucid and precise knowledge there remains a zone of unclear and new ideas. Alongside the satisfaction children feel at the end of a lesson they would always be eager to learn what would come next.

This notion provides for the stimulation of children's creativity. Children independently seek answers to their questions, try to clarify that which puzzles them, put forward conjectures and suppositions, find the best way out by trial and error, and acquire the ability to learn new things on their own.

At present, new principles of selection and organisation of knowledge for preschool children have been devised where the acquisition of knowledge ensures the flexibility and dynamism of children's thinking and encourages them to ask questions. In the course of their investigations the children independently search for answers to these questions and consequently acquire new and unexpected knowledge.

In general our programme was very variable. Different parts of it may be expanded and the emphasis may be transferred from one part to another. As children work through the programme, the initial forms of understanding of the world begin to take shape in them, a mobile, changing and developing world with diverse interconnections and interdependencies. The content of the programme contains that component which involves a world outlook.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW MODEL OF PUBLIC PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

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We have been working on the development of a new model of public preschool education, involving a kindergarten in Moscow testing the 'Golden Key' experimental programme. A further six kindergartens have recently joined the project. When we first began, we only had a vague idea of the problems to be solved, though we knew that new psychological principles for developing an innovative model of preschool education would be necessary. We have adopted therefore two main theoretical positions: first, and of primary importance, that meanings must be personalised; second, that human beings are social beings.

These theoretical positions called for certain organisational decisions and an adjustment to new educational principles. Among the latter are:

The priority of family upbringing

Public preschool education kindergartens are complementary to the family in creating a personality. The recognition of this does not belittle the role of the kindergartens, but puts everything into perspective. In our experimental institutions the parents are always informed about everything taking place there. It is the children, not the teachers, who involve the parents. When a child is interested in what is going on in the kindergarten, and can hardly wait to get there in the morning, the parents grow interested too. They find themselves actively participating in the kindergarten's life. As groups of children are designed to resemble family groups, the kindergarten becomes their extended family. There is no replacement for a family. In a family one finds universal human interaction and intimate personal links between children and the adults nearest to them, which make human beings what they are.

The complementarity of family and kindergarten:
The modern nuclear family cannot provide the child with the complete range of interactions. This was of principal importance in our experimental kindergartens and a factor for which the kindergarten needs to compensate. In our opinion, however, the present day kindergartens are unable to do this for a variety of reasons. Two reasons may be cited here:
The artificial division of children into age groups:
In a big family, there would not only be children of the same age group, so in a kindergarten children's development is best supported in groups which are more like those of a family.
The biassed position of many kindergarten teachers
Teachers are always central to educational processes. They always set the goals for children's activities and control and evaluate them. Teachers require children to do as they say. All meaningful activities are controlled by teachers.

Our educational approach

An events approach
Educational process in our kindergartens is built upon an events approach. An event may be anything that has an emotional impact on a child and which finds a response in his or her soul. Some events may be planned, a visit or visitor, and others spontaneous - a flower blossoming, the first fall of snow. Children prepare for events as a whole group and discuss them afterwards.

In making use of events, we are able to encourage children's own activities, based on their personal life experiences. Through these activities the initiative belongs to the children themselves and not to the teacher though the role of the adult has an important organisational aspect in this process.

Creating conditions for each child's individual activity
Children must have a chance to be alone, even in modern kindergartens. To give them this opportunity we need to organise the available space and furniture appropriately.

Finally our experience tells us that the organisation of kindergartens in this way needs extra resources. Most importantly, they require intensive, selfless and creative teachers. These investments justify themselves many times over.

WHICH PROGRAMME?

Ewa Branska

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The whole education system in Poland is currently undergoing refurbishment, and curricula need a critical analysis. The Department of General Education of the Ministry of National Education created a 'programme /curriculum division', which adopted a 'concept of substantial changes to the general education programme'.

According to this concept, the knowledge and skills that pupils will acquire are to be selected much more cautiously and using different criteria. This will concentrate pupils' attention on four main developmental targets, relevant to all young children, preparing them for the responsibilities of independent life. The new general education will offer mainly information and skills which should enable pupils to:

a) find harmony and internal balance (to live in peace with oneself);
b) coexist with our planet's natural environment (instead of the presently wasteful exploitation of natural resources);
c) act effectively within different groups and communities;
d) use information resources of our civilization (finding the necessary information without needless obstacles).

It is apparent that the tasks set by this new concept of general education are very close to the ideas of nursery school education, such as: creation of the conditions for the very versatile education of children; stimulation of pupils by their own free initiative; enhancement of children's experience by contacts with nature; their introduction to social life.

The nursery school is an intermediate step between family life and school, and its task is to secure the continuity of educational experiences between the two. The proper realization of these purposes by a teacher should be supported by the nursery-school-education curriculum.

The following questions may be asked: Does the present programme fulfil these requirements? Should it be updated or changed?

Children's development at nursery-school age should be considered in perspective to their whole lives, both considering the influence of early childhood and taking into account the importance of those changes for future individual development.

Though particular areas of human development may be distinguished, it must be remembered that a person grows as a mental and physical entity and that the development of one area influences the same process in the others. Further, this rarely occurs simultaneously in any two children, there is frequent acceleration or delay. Teachers are aware of the differentiation in speed and phases of children's development - due to upbringing, environmental influence, and unique genetic conditions. Thus it is necessary to take into account the principle of individual education. Nursery school teachers should provide the kind of education which enables the child to explore different forms of spontaneous activities. The future programme of nursery-school education should therefore not be an official document but a proposal, a framework - how to bring up a child.

It should not be interpreted in a prescriptive way. For example: it should not suggest that a three-year-old child should internalize a particular set of information, but instead should suggest that an average child of this age is characterized by certain capabilities, but as each child is unique, there will be much variation in either direction, above or below that 'level'. Teachers noticing an inequality in the phases of development, resulting from acceleration or delay, should adapt activities according to children's individual needs. The effectiveness of these activities is therefore dependent upon a deep knowledge of the child. Education should help individual children to 'create themselves'. This situation, when adjusted to the capabilities of different children, should inspire new activities. The upbringing is not a development acceleration but the enrichment of children's activities with new, unknown elements, which motivate children to become involved in new experiences. Teachers need to act as mediators of cultural heritage transfer and make it possible for children to choose. Organized education should only accompany spontaneous, independent and individual education. Using the programme, any teacher should have the opportunity to choose topics and activities according to children's needs and their adopted educational principles.

According to these principles, the structure of information and assignments in the programme should show the child's development in the following areas: movement, thinking, speech, emotions, social relationships. The nursery school environment should favour such development. The organization of the first year at school should be similar to that in a nursery school. The classic concept of a lesson might be substituted by the 'pupil's working day', introducing pauses after changeable periods.

Should the programme be general or detailed? A general programme would probably be preferable, providing a minimum level which becomes a common base and which is part of all programmes. It is supported also by the conditions and needs of the society in which the particular nursery school exists. There is a clear trend to create organisationally different structures of nursery-school education. Local communities, which the institution is to serve, make decisions about the kind of nursery school to be developed. Creative teachers' teams, would be able to supplement the proposed minimal level with different process and content, according to the educational concept they have adopted. Moreover, the natural evolution of programmes would be ensured, and finally new, interesting solutions could be applied at particular nursery schools without major obstacles.

PROGRAMMES FOR KINDERGARTENS[1]

Jose Maria Quero Martin

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Educational theory underpins many activities designed for young children, and theory can indicate ways in which different programmes might be implemented in practice. The programme and the underpinning theory are of extreme importance for schools, as they influence practice through the practical organization of school work.

Programmes are also quite often affected by external influences which can obstruct and hinder their implementation.

The scientific history of programmes is short, going back to only 1918, and most authors agree that their 'father' is Bobbit. Nevertheless, in the course of this short period of time, many conceptions came into existence, varying according to the philosophical and psychological ideas on which they were based.

In terms of their significance for educational practice, these varied conceptions can be divided into two broad groups:

a) conceptions aimed at mastering content and achieving results.

b) conceptions aimed at development as the basic value (education as a process).

The first group is based on the doctrine of behaviourism, whose chief representative in the educational aspect is Benjamin Bloom. The second group is based on developmental psychology, the principal figures in which are Piaget, Bruner, Gagne, Ausubel. We shall focus our attention on the second group, as it is more oriented to the 0-6 age group which interests us.

We will analyze the principles and values that form the basis of our programme, and discuss different aspects of it and respective models of children's upbringing. Finally we will propose the lines on which a new programme can be developed.

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1. This paper constituted the Plenary Session of the seminar.

1. The notion of programme

The notion of programme has a number of specific features which interest us, including its relative ambiguity (due to its conciseness and polymorphism). This results in numerous definitions and philosophical concepts of 'programme'. In order to understand the programme's significance, it is necessary to examine its foundations, and match them with the experiences which the children acquire in kindergarten such as values, traditions, and skills, and which are part of process of upbringing.

The notion of 'values' is fundamental here. In some countries the idea of 'up-bringing' is in itself a value. According to Stenhouse, the programme (or curriculum) is an attempt to determine the most important features and principles of 'educational intentions' in a form that leaves them open for discussion and criticism, and permits them to be effectively put into practice.

2. Principles and values

The principles and values on which our programme is based are grounded on the anthropology of freedom.

3. Issues related to the programme

The main issues involved in the programme were: the development of learning, psychosomatics, speech, biological and social questions, hygienic training, development of social activity, artistic education. We also believe that a programme of children's education should be completely creative.

4. Principle features of the programme

4.1. *General guidelines*

A programme for educating children from 0 to 6 years old, should be:

a) flexible, open to changes and additions;
b) integrating;
c) oriented towards the process of development;
d) interacting with the family;
e) compensatory (making up for other disadvantages).

4.2 *Pedagogical goals*

a) To create conditions ensuring the integral development of children up to the age of 6 (physical, emotional, intellectual, social,) and to foster developing independence, creativity and ability to criticize.

b) To help the children to build up their own positive and realistic self-image.
c) To satisfy the child's craving for communication with other children and adults.
d) To help children realize their own faculties and capabilities to stimulate them to be active and creative.

4.3 *The content of activity*

Where preschool institutions are concerned, it is a matter of 'centres of interest', focused on the requirements and interests of the children rather than of specific content. A choice of content, however, can be made if the following moments are taken into account:

a) centres of interest will not be effective in themselves if they do not stimulate internal developmental processes;
b) notice must be taken of the individual traits and interests and age of each child; particularly of their desire to learn;
c) the principal sources of choice are the child, the family and the preschool institution;
d) all actions will be effective only if they are accepted by the child.

4.4 *Methodological principles and criteria*

a) Education is a process of building up co-operation between adults and children. It is based on actions, quests, and shared thinking.
b) The chief figures in preschool education are children, parents and teachers. Therefore educational issues go far beyond the framework of the kindergarten. They represent a dynamic process which takes into account both the idiosyncrasies of each child, and the individuality and subjectiveness of teachers, and parents all of whom recognise the value of the family's participation.
c) Educational work can be done anywhere and at any time The rhythm of every day, and its routine actions should be a source of experience for the child.
d) Children's development is an integral process which needs to be supported by an integral methodology. Children's motivation forms an integral whole and any activity stimulates intellectual, psychomotor, and expressive mechanisms simultaneously. Teachers organize the life of groups of children to correspond with this integrity of each child, their ability to live and perceive the world as a whole.
e) A teacher's knowledge of each child's emotions, interests, and requirements, is the main principle of any educational work.
f) Every child has an individual mental structure.

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g) Each child is an active being, the subject of his or her own education.
h) The best way to teach a preschool child is through first hand experience.
i) Education is most effective when it is based on activity and involves making discoveries. Children grow fully active when they internalise an action, when they reproduce it in their minds, and when in their play they make use of their investigative skills, calculations and quests.
j) Creative activity helps to develop a sense of independence, critical abilities and the feeling of being sure of oneself.
k) Activity, as far as possible, should involve children's thought processes so that by thinking about what they do they become able to represent their learning symbolically.
l) Play is a necessary and basic means in kindergartens, a vitally important factor in children's existence, and one that facilitates their interactions with each other.
m) Co-operation between adults and children, and between children themselves, needs to be facilitated. Small groups for play and other types of activity can be created to promote this.
n) Every child has their own rhythm of activity, development and maturation.
o) Children's curiosity and longing to learn motivates and sustains their actions.
p) Various aspects of development - intellectual, emotional, social, physical - must be given equal stimulation.
q) Children's mental development is facilitated and their foundations laid for conceptual thinking through the planned increase of complexity in the activities they do.
r) Children should be permitted to formulate their own propositions, even if they are mistaken ones. Mistakes and outcomes can prompt children to revise and rectify the original ideas.
s) True individualization means adopting educational methods to the age and personal ideosyncracies of each child.
t) Both adults and peers help children to continually develop and extend cognitive patterns which are then applied to reality.
u) Observations are of great importance, not only for teachers (as a means of diagnosis to aid development), but also for children. This methodological principle should be a consistent part of practice.
v) It is very important that adults stimulate and help children to avoid delayed development.

w) The daily routine should be organized as starting points for development. It should be planned to develop an 'inquisitive mind' in each child.
x) Adults doing too much for children, may slow down their development.
y) The basic skills and habits corresponding to a child's age should be developed in each child so that they have the necessary abilities for controlling their own world.
z) A favourable climate of support, benevolence and affection is the foundation for all the above methodological principles.

4.5 *Appraisal / Evaluation*
The process should be appraised frequently, so as to make use of feedback. Important aspects to be evaluated include:
a) Does the programme correspond to the age and developmental level of each child?
b) What is the quality of the child's experience? (ie.type of choice, processes, motivation).
c) How well grounded are the methodological strategies?
The evaluation of progress is necessary in order to decide on necessary improvements to the project.

5. Conclusions
A preschool institution is not 'a store selling education', it is a means of passing on values to children. Educational activity in preschool settings is guided by the constructive conception of development and pedagogic intervention based on the model of the process. In our programme for preschool children the concept of children's development is interpreted as a process subject to purposeful influence. Therefore, the programme:
a) provides for a study of the process of children's development from 0 to 6 years of age;
b) defines the values and goals that determine the educational process.

'LANDMARKS' - A PROGRAMME FOR PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

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Landmarks in preschool education is the new programme for kindergartens in Lithuania. It has been devised to lay a firm foundation for the collaboration of kindergarten teachers and the families of children who attend, in an attempt to acquaint as broad a circle of people as possible with the reform of preschool education. The programme describes significant general educational issues, elucidates the concept of upbringing, specifies its trends, goals, principles, prerequisites, and explains what is meant by preparing a child for school. '*Landmarks*' includes an appraisal of various trends and ideas in the educational process (Fröbel, Decroly, Montessori, Steiner, Piaget).

In developing the 'Landmarks' programme we believe all kindergartens to be in need of an original, modern programme which accords with the requirements of the educational reform and takes account of the rapid rates of children's social development. The contents and processes of education must be humanized, made more democratic, and brought closer to the needs of preschool children. These criteria form the basis for the conceptual basis of the programme, and the content of preschool children's education.

Looking to current realities of life and progressive pedagogy, we reject the 'subject' principle of education in which the panorama of the world is split up into separate parts. Ideas of integration are not new in Lithuania, as far back as 1939, Professor A. Guchas advocated integration in his book 'Kindergarten Pedagogics'.

It is difficult for kindergartens to renounce traditional practice, but they must do this if they hope to help children realise the unity and harmony of the world. The 'landmarks' programme attempts to integrate educational content. For example: problems of speech development are not regarded as merely linguistic concerns, similarly, knowledge of mathematics is not an end in itself. The principle goal of education should be to help children to understand the world around them and find their place in it, to create the conditions necessary for the optimal blossoming

out of their spiritual and physical abilities. The integration of educational content is reflected in the goals and contents of each 'subject'.

When teachers first began the new 'Landmarks' programme they faced problems which needed some creative thinking. For example: how to plan integrated educational content so that a comprehensive education is provided which embraces children's intellectual, social, emotional and physical development. 'Landmarks' will help teachers to find ways of developing such education, but it is also important that the teachers' opinions are valued, and that they are supported in their practice which is still a new creative experience.

'Landmarks' also stresses the individuality of each child. Within families, children acquire different social and cultural experiences, different ways of comprehending the world, different skills, interests and characteristics. It is therefore essential to avoid uniformity and 'levelling out'. The basis of education should be that children are seen as they are, and not as one would like them to be. This notion should be reflected in the programme content and educational methodology.

Unfortunately the 'Landmarks' programme is still oriented towards a content of education which is strictly outlined, detailed and obligatory for all children. Such a programme limits children and teachers because it stifles activity, whereas initiative stimulates teachers' creativity.

In order to focus teachers' attention to activity, initiative and creativity, the 'Landmarks' programme does not indicate numbers of lessons per week, nor does it state annual references to children's development because children develop at different rates. 'Landmarks' does not allocate certain parts of content to certain stages in education, but instead describes in detail, the specific features of education in each respective field. This structure helps to eliminate the links between various educational fields and gives teachers the opportunity to make use of their psychological and pedagogical knowledge.

The 'Landmarks' programme suggests going back to the method of play which has been tried and tested throughout the ages. Play must become the dominant educational process in kindergartens, as academic lessons and exercises are unsuitable for preschool children. Teachers should be familiar with the ideas of Frobel and Piaget who explained the significance of play in early childhood.

Piaget opened up the greatest prospects for practical preschool education, proving that developmental stages cannot be violated and that a child's potential must be revealed naturally through play. Piaget related play to creative activities as through play a child understands and represents the world. Play is a natural state for every child, which

furthers his or her intellectual and physical development. If play, activity, creativity and individualisation are part of the education of preschool children, kindergartens should become less like schools.

'Landmarks' regards a child's speech as more than the traditional view of 'speech development'. Speech is a means of liberating a child's spirit, comprehending the world, shaping a child's personality, passing on national culture, developing perception and thinking, forming an aesthetic view, and of socialisation. Children's speech develops naturally, through a process based on children's knowledge of language and their ability to imitate. Therefore the teacher's speech needs to be clear and precise. Development of children's speech depends on their daily interaction with adults and other children. This is built upon experience, impressions and self expression through drawing, music, children's literature. Talking together in the kindergarten integrates children's entire lives and the whole content of education.

Art plays a significant part in the child's developing perceptions of the world and its unity, and in shaping children's aesthetic taste. Children express their thoughts, feelings and fantasies in very diverse ways, in drawing, sculpting, dancing, playing musical instruments, singing, drama and talking. Children's sensations develo, as a whole, they experience the joy of creativity and learn to convey their thoughts and feelings.

Teachers should avoid forcing their own style on children. Their task is to help each child to find their own way of self expression. To do this teachers must have a good knowledge of the stages of children's development and aesthetic abilities. Children's creativity and their belief in their own abilities decrease if their efforts are not responded to.

The aims and content of aesthetic education, including art, music and drama, are now more closely linked with children's needs and potential. The 'subjects' of the aesthetic cycle cannot be isolated either from each other or from the daily educational process. They must not be used merely to demonstrate children's achievements.

'Landmarks' deals extensively with children's acquaintance with the environment. The object of cognition is the whole world: natural and physical, people as a part of nature and society, their activities, work, traditions, and customs. We must give children not only a knowledge of the material world but experience of moral and aesthetic aspects of life.

Well organized activity opens broad possibilities for children to demonstrate physical energy. Artistic, verbal and physical activities and play, are especially suitable for children's self expression and socialization. The children's physical training should be seen as a way of

providing them with opportunities to satisfy the inherent need to move naturally.

The 'Landmarks' programme of teaching elementary work skills envisages group work outdoors, manual work and so on, with the aim of shaping a value-based approach to work, the child's responsibility for it, and the desire to complete the work begun. Great changes are needed in the way kindergartens function, so that they ensure children's holistic development and shape children's values. First teachers themselves need to work more creatively and with greater responsibility.

The 'Landmarks in Preschool Education Programme' is an experimental programme and it will continue to be improved and developed, taking appraisal and comments into account.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL SELF APPRAISAL IN DEVELOPING THE SKILLS OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

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The development of preschool education is a burning issue for Belarussian educators and psychologists. In particular we are concerned with developing the professional skills of kindergarten teachers. These teachers need a professionalization of their self awareness, and implicit within this is the self-appraisal of the person/professional. When professional self-appraisal takes place spontaneously, it is usually fragmented and often lacks the significant content and process of professional-educational activity. This has a negative effect on the teacher's work.

We have developed a system of teachers' self-evaluation which envisages the gradual expansion and in-depth development of professional-personality reflection. The aim of this is to intensify the process and enrich the content of professional self-awareness, and promote self-evaluation and self-appraisal. Their complex self-evaluation programme began with our conception of pedagogical activity and the job description of a kindergarten teacher developed on this basis.

The development of the job description is an important and complex issue. The new 'Concept of Preschool Education' was written in 1989 with the aim of introducing certain pedagogical practice. The primary goal is to make the early years of childhood a happy period of life, and to shape the beginnings of a creative personality. To do this, it becomes necessary to change the duties of teachers. Special attention needs to be given to teacher skills in diagnosis, group control and dynamics, behaviour management and contact with parents. The aftermath of the Chernobyl tragedy heightened concerns for protecting and promoting children's health and their physical development.

The programme of professional self-evaluation asks teachers to evaluate both their interaction with children and their effectiveness in terms of children's physical and intellectual development, emotional well-being, their learning and personal development.

Teachers interactions with children are particularly important and can be categorised as follows:-

Stage 1 Teachers' values and attitudes

This includes a teacher's approach to children, activities and their work; their social perception; their level of understanding of children; and empathy.

Stage 2 Teachers' methodology, styles and knowledge

This includes teachers' professional interaction and development. In particular the individual teacher's verbal and non-verbal behaviour is investigated; their vocabulary; their evaluative judgements; their gestures in addressing children. Also relevant is selectivity, when and where teachers communicate; do they communicate only with certain children? This stage identifies the teacher's style as, 'authoritarian' or 'democratic'.

Stage 3 Pedagogical interaction

Here teachers' interactions with children can be identified. For example: teachers' forms of communication with children can be defined as 'severe', 'cold', 'distant', 'negative', and attitudes may be described as 'soft', 'warm', 'positive'. These interactions can be described according to teachers' interactions with children.

Stage 4 Individual pedagogic interaction

This stage sees a teacher move from the general to the specific. Here a diagnosis is made of the individual style of pedagogic interaction, according to the characteristics of interaction mentioned above. The study of pedagogic interactions turns into a study of the teacher's integral personality which influences his or her pedagogic activity and makes it individual.

Stage 5 Teachers' self evaluation

This was devised on the basis of the stylistic characteristics identified through stages 1 - 4. A programme is planned to facilitate the improvement of the style of the particular teacher's interaction.

In practice stages 1 and 2 may be reversed, a teacher's behaviour may be studied first and pedagogic interaction afterwards. Alternatively, stages 1 and 2 could be considered simultaneously.

The diagnostic self-evaluation programmes can be used for training student kindergarten teachers as well as for continuing education for experienced teachers. The development of preparedness for professional self-evaluation is important to the extension of psychological knowledge; for shaping pedagogical standards and criteria of appraisals; for acquiring the skills of practical, psychological diagnostic methods; and for developing a reflective attitude towards oneself.

Our studies suggest that systematic work in the spheres of educational activity described above can help kindergarten teachers in a number of ways, for example: effectively organising a child's environment and reducing problems which occur as a result of difficulties in interpersonal relationships between teacher and child, or child and child. Consequently, favourable conditions are created for shaping the beginnings of a creative personality, of an optimistic image of one's ego, of the prerequesites of a preschool child's humanistic self-actualization. Significant outcomes of teachers' professional self-evaluation include: the refinement of self-regulation, the identification of teachers with a set style of pedagogical interaction, and the determination of teachers' individual styles. Through this, teachers are more able to use the productive characteristics of their personality and activity as educators, and compensate for their weaker aspects.

SECTION 2: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Part 2: Developing children's thinking and creativity

CONSTRUCTION AS A MEANS OF DEVELOPING THINKING AND CREATIVE IMAGINATION IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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One of the most important tasks of present-day pedagogics is the shaping of a creative personality and creative activity.

Play and imagination are significant in shaping creativity, (see for example, the work of Vygotsky, Ilyenkov, Davydov). Creativity should therefore be shaped through the development of imagination. Vygotsky pointed out that to create new images, it is necessary to provide an internal interconnection between thinking, imagination, arbitrariness and freedom of activity.

Given the above, we studied the principal types of materials which children use to make constructions. Having determined the specific features of each type of construction material, we analysed the content and organizational features of each type and how it might shape children's thinking, imagination, and creativity. Below we shall briefly describe the main approaches in these investigations, their results and the conclusions drawn.

Constructing with building blocks

Constructing with blocks of different geometrical shape is an activity used throughout the preschool age and is linked with play. However, the nature of the relationship between playing and constructing, revealed in the course of our investigation, convinced us that these two types of activity should be separated, that construction should not be looked upon as a special form of play.

Zaporpzhets emphasizes the ability of preschool age children to establish and represent the connections between objects and phenomena. This ability underpins the development of a new form of construction activity involving construction to a set condition. Children placed in this situation are not given a ready model, but are set definite conditions under which the object they construct should function. For example, to build a bridge for pedestrians and traffic, spanning a river, a sheet of blue paper

of definite width so that 2 or 3 toy ships would be able to sail under it. In the process of such a construction the child, first analyzes the problem, then thinks of the image of the bridge to be built. Next a child finds the ways to solve the problem, and plans what to do and chooses the necessary materials.

Our study illustrates that high-level activity takes place within a definite system. The children were first able to construct following a given model (as models, we offered different constructions of one and the same object, each time a more and more complicated one). Second, the children then solved the problems on changing the model. Finally, the children then solved problems which needed the independent production of a construction needed for a particular situation.

As a result, the children mastered the means of building up both practical and intellectual activity of a sufficiently complex structure. They analyzed objects and phenomena not separately, but in the system of their functioning.

The study found that problems involving an ability to conceive various spatial positions were the most difficult for preschool children to solve.

Focusing on the process of construction, we studied the conditions under which spatial dynamic notions are shaped in older preschool children. Teaching strategies included the use of specially devised computer programmes which required children to move images by means of object and 'computer' construction.

Construction with paper

Paper construction is widely used with kindergarten children. Consequently we developed a new teaching method aimed at shaping an ability to construct things independently out of paper. Practical activities were used too help children single out ways of solving construction problems. This involved making a toy and in a way which was interesting for the child, showing that various isolated skills were employed in making many different toys. For example, working on a bar-shaped box, one can make a 'house' for starlings, a letter box, a bus, and aquarium, a couch. After this, and independently, children needed to use these now familiar strategies for solving problems and transfer what they knew to current activity.

Later, children worked independently to produce figurines for the theatre, carnival costumes and so on. The children not only made use of these methods, but thought up new ones, revealing their lively imaginations.

Constructing with special construction sets

Traditionally construction sets are used to teach children to assemble models shown on pictures supplied with each set, using various kinds of fixtures. However, this does not help the development of children's thinking and creativity.

Our study developed a way of teaching the older preschool children to use this type of construction material to build their own constructions. We developed a system for this which included the following stages:

a) the children independently experiment with the new materials without any set problems;

b) solving problem tasks of two types - directed at developing imagination and shaping generalized methods of construction - (both of these call for children to experiment;

c) independent construction.

The children became thoroughly familiarized with the new materials before any problems were set. This helped them later to demonstrate ways they had discovered of fixing the different parts in the sets in various, often unexpected combinations, and to produce original solutions. They showed a brilliant tendency towards searching for variety.

Our study highlighted the importance of setting a 'problem' in the creative process. Setting children problems before enabling their wide and independent experimention with the new materials, is untimely, since such problems, create too narrow a focus for the children's construction activity. As a result, the children do not search for alternatives, or adopt rational methods. Their principal goal is to solve the problem successfully.

Constructing from natural materials.

The use of natural materials was studied in order to investigate children's creation of an artistic image. We considered two forms in the organization of construction from natural materials.

a) The first form: the children were asked to make something specific, for example, a bird or a boy, out of a natural material. They were told just how to do it, what material to use and so on, afterwards they were told to create either separate figurines or simple compositions, as they chose. During such construction the image appeared not so much in children's imagination as in the process of practical activity, and imagination developed poorly. Emotions were observed in the children only in

connection with the achieved result, with the encouragement of the adult or the approval of a peer.

b) The second form: beforehand, the teacher selected several roots, twigs, pieces of bark, the configuration of which bore a resemblance to something such as a fish, a snake, a running deer. Showing these to the children the teacher asked: 'What does this look like?', 'And what if we glance at this root from below?' and so on. In other words, the adult acquainted children with the material without setting any task, but instead stimulating and directing the children's imaginations and helping them to create an image. Later on, when gathering the natural material in a park or forest, the children began to think of various figures in one and the same object. They explored it, changing its spatial position, creating different images and, later form this, produced original articles and made up interesting fairy tales.

Conclusions

Activities involving construction at a preschool age may be an effective means of developing thinking, imagination and creativity. However, children need to be taught to experiment, to fulfil problem tasks directed at shaping imagination, and to generalize methods of constructing. They need ways of independently developing their own activity, and a positive emotional climate. We suggest that construction activity is optimal for forming those mental features which are indispensable for the realization of any activity, verbal, artistic, musical and so on, through which the whole is built up of parts, and a new object is created on the basis of an image.

PSYCHO-PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES IN STUDYING AND STIMULATING CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY

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Creativity in children's activities is important in the pedagogical process. The following conditions facilitate creative activities:

1. A match between the tasks children do and their abilities.
2. A view of creative activity as an aim and criterion of pedagogical process, ensuring an influence on the development of children's personalities.
3. Determination of the specific nature of each activity children undertake, so that different activities can be integrated.

The analysis of creative action presented here suggests that it is a complex, dynamic process in relation to children and their surroundings. Early creative actions show the character of a child's socio-cognitive experience which is formed as they come into contact with adults. Because of this we feel the organisation of communication is basic to evaluating and stimulating creative activity. The creative stage of any activity includes the child in different phases of communication:

1. Perception: the analysis of socially worked, sensory, artistic, behavioural criteria and standard measures like basic elements in the creative process.
2. Transformation: coding of new significant features of systematically developing elements of activity.
3. Influence: through the emergence of creative activity, individually significant recognition related to the socially valuable.

In order to establish adaptation, individualisation and integration as one process of development, a social influence must be optimised by planned organisation of internal levels of the activity of the individual. Children's activities need to be directed in ways which regulate different types of communication.

Synchronization of motivated and behavioural decision making is encouraged by developing children's ability to transform the situation for which they have their own aims and find ways to achieve them. Building

one strategy of motivation is conditioned by parallel levels of reproduction and creative activity in the cognitive process.

Three main aspects of children's creative activity were identified:

1. Formations of personal qualities corresponding to the characteristics of the creative process.
2. Modelling the general conditions for creative activity helped children to decide their own creative activities and work independently.
3. Interpersonal relationships were fostered and developed through the complex processes of creative activity.

The experimental model used in our research includes characteristics and various relations between imagination, thinking, and perception, interpreted in representation and creative levels. The inter-related functions of imagination in the cognitive process are related to a person's ability to organise, act and initiate. Whilst developing pedagogical conditions which fostered imagination, criteria for evaluation of activity were included. These criteria are:-

1. Characteristics of transferrable knowledge, skills and approaches whilst designing an image, a situation and strategies to solve tasks;
2. Variation whilst transforming images, situations and approaches to different activities;
3. Integration of knowledge, skills and approaches in the development of imagination;
4. Projecting the image, situation and plan of activity.

We have identified three cognitive levels:-

Level 1: Perception is an important feature at this level. In the cognitive cycle, imagination ensures selective activity of data, obtained through sensitive experiences.

Level 2: At this level, logical and cognitive evaluations are carried out, problematic tasks are solved and functions of thinking are discovered. If thinking is part of the logico-cognitive structure of the image and the transfer is governed by this logic, in its relatively independence, imagination ensures variants of logical solutions. In this way some specific functions of imagination are underpinned in the transfer of knowledge and skills.

Level 3: This is a level of initiative transformation which determines the creative functions of imagination in the cognitive process.

Our study emphasises the dynamic presentation of the imagination in relation to four areas: age group; content and condition of the activity; general socio-practical experience of the child; functional properties of imagination in certain children.

The comparative characteristics of the general psychological activity and the specific behavioural property of imagination lead us to the following conclusions:

1. The specific characteristics of children's behaviour are influenced by sensory and intellectual generalisation.
2. The imagery-artistic and constructive imagination have a relatively independent development, because of this each child's ability to evaluate can be different. At this age children reach constructive solutions with remarkable image concretization. This points to complex use of various types of imagination.
3. Some characteristics of imagination relate to psychological and some behavioural elements of children's behaviour.
4. Our study of children aged 5 - 6 years, suggests factors which may control the imagination. We applied evaluated levels in artistic, constructive and game activity. The results were significant when related to aspects of control and wider practical situations.

Other areas of imagination need to be researched including representation which is closely related to aspects of perception and thinking. The integration of imagination as part of cognition suggests new ways for optimising this as part of creative activity.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVITY IN THE INFANT SCHOOL

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I. Creativity in nursery school[1]

Creativity and sensory development

If all subjects and people and children of all ages have the potential and disposition to create, it is the infant school which must foster children's contact with the socio-cultural system and educators of young children are in a position to detect this potential. Early year teachers invite children to explore different ways of thinking, using reasoning and imagination to achieve the creative thought.

We have to make sure that in infant school, children are taught in an atmosphere which enables them to perceive the smallest details, and to see what others do not see and have not seen. This implies complete sensory development.

Necessity

The infant school needs to be a place of growth and apprenticeship not only for children but also for the adult. In this way, the infant school has three main protagonists: children, parents and teachers. All need to work together to make the infant school an 'innovative' place which encourages and develops creativity from the earliest ages.

During the last thirteen years, the study of the brain has developed very rapidly because of new techniques which allow scientists to investigate zones that were previously only a matter for speculation. Investigations have aroused much interest in one of the two parts of the brain because it is found that the two hemispheres work differently. We have therefore broadened our concept of the intellectual process. While the left hemisphere separates aspects of information into the parts that

1. In Spain this sector - age 0-6 years - is known as *educacion infantil*. Thus the word "infant" is used here in translation to indicate the stage of the child, even though the sector in English would normally be called 'nursery' education.

form a whole, the right hemisphere combines these parts to create a whole.

Further, the left hemisphere develops 'vertical' thought while the right hemisphere develops 'lateral' thought. The left hemisphere can be compared with a digital computer and the right hemisphere with a kaleidoscope. The digital computer is lineal and sequential; it passes from a point to another using logician's rules and language. The kaleidoscope combines, simultaneously, separate parts to create a rich variety of patterns and images.

In early education the functioning of both hemispheres must be complementary because of the importance of the two types of thought. Investigations of the brain suggest that individual pupils learn in very different ways and employ different modes of handling information.

II. Models and techniques for developing creativity in the infant school

The model we have developed is built on the idea of two hemispheres of the brain which influence the world and science. We will define the characteristics of our model teaching practice and the theoretical base with which we began:

a) We take a naturalistic point of view, an integrative model in accordance with humanist philosophy.

b) Our pedagogy will be person-centred: the child will be the centre of the educative process, the only person, and different from others.

c) For the youngest ages, we will take the development of the two hemispheres into consideration: right and left, because the child has not yet developed the right or the left one as dominant.

Characteristics of models to develop the brain in young children

a) Development of both hemispheres: In the years up to four, we will take the development of both hemispheres into consideration. Starting at the age of four years, we will be interested in the right hemisphere's development.

b) Attitude, self-image, motivation and ability to solve problems are fundamental to the expression of intelligence.

c) Group-work, involving communication, is as important as individual work.

d) The experience of apprenticeship and knowledge acquisition according to maturational levels is important.

e) Context and coordination are important, as are mutual collaboration (teachers and parents) to help the child 'to grow' intellectually.

The development of each individual

Attitude, self-image, motivation, and ability to solve problems are four factors which help to free the intellect, or to imprison it for ever. Let us examine the important term of education and family life.

Attitudes

What we do or say is not so important as the way we do it or say it. The attitudes of adults, parents and teachers, transmitted to children, have a powerful influence on the way children view themselves and their capacities. These personal images form the basis for children's self image.

If teachers and adults consider children intelligent, they will be self-confident and successful. However if they are watched disparagingly and considered unsuccessful, this inculcates in children the idea of failure.

Some education professionals affirm the bad influence of mental tests because they 'label' children as 'intelligent' or 'retarded'.

Independently of assessments, the attitudes of parents are influenced differently from those of teachers. For parents it is important that children acquire basic apprenticeship in reading, writing and mathematics, from an early age.

Importance of self image

Our research shows that if children seem awkward when they know they are being watched, this will influence their view of themselves. The American specialist on this subject, Dr Yamamoto says: "The concept that the child has about his abilities can be as crucial for his success as these abilities". The ideal image of the child represents the kind of person she or he would like to be. This image is then built up to portray what everyone is, and sometimes there is a conflict if individual children do not like their images and deny everything about themselves.

Professor Lewis gives some pointers to the type of behaviour which can damage the self image of young children, for example,

"Let me do it, you are too small."
"Why don't you make an effort?"
"Why don't you ask first?"
"Take notice of what's-his-name?"
"You will never succeed in anything."
"Don't be stupid."

"Can't you do anything well?"
"You are a very bad child."
"You are lazy."

Motivation

Motivation is a cognitive-affective process that is made with a clear personal vision important to every one.

It is important, as teachers, that we know the aspirations of all pupils, in order to build on these aspirations, and to ensure that children enjoy everything they do. This is important because when learning is pleasant it creates motivation, and the wish to learn makes learning possible. Different needs determine different behaviours which can be directed to satisfy them as quickly as possible. This need for success is to mental activity, what hunger and thirst, for example, are to bodily reactions.

Ability to solve problems

Some psychologists affirm that intelligence lies in the appropriate approach and the problem's solution. In school, strategies are not often taught, only problems which have precise answer.

In real life, children will find problems which need an imaginative approach in order to solve them. This will drive them to new points of view, and they will achieve success by applying convergent thought for all the problems they encounter.

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TO BE SIX YEARS OLD IN SWEDEN IN THE 1990s

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Never before have preschool children and their situation been discussed as much in the mass media in Sweden as they are today. The reason for this is a government proposal giving parents the right to decide if their child should begin school at the age of 6. This proposal breaks with a tradition of approximately 150 years, which decreed that school should begin at 7 years of age.

In Sweden, there is a big difference between the preschool and primary school in general, although a lot of experiments with integration are being developed. The different worlds of pre and primary school are, to a large extent, due to traditionally different content in teacher training courses. In the training of preschool teachers, the emphasis is on theories of child development, resulting in a preschool focusing on the child. In the training of primary school teachers, theories of learning are emphasized, resulting in a primary school focusing on the subject matter.

There seems to be a trend all over the world towards lowering the age at which school begins. Russia lowered it some years ago to 6, in Holland children begin at 4, and so do many children in England and the United States. One obvious reason for this trend is the financial aspect. Day-care and other preschool programmes are often based on a fee, while compulsory schooling is free of charge. The trend towards lowering the school age means that more and more children all over the world are losing some years of their childhood. They lose it as soon as the teacher takes over the initiative, structuring many hours a day for the children.

Why do we want children to learn to read, write and count as early as possible? To push children into formal schooling is not only a question of beginning school. We can see the same trend within preschool towards teacher-structured programmes, focusing on the skills of reading, writing and counting.

Summarizing the results of many studies, we claim that the earlier the teacher takes over and begins to teach children, the worse it is for the child's later development and learning. However, I will not argue for a totally child-centred, play-oriented preschool programme. Instead I

believe Elkind was right when he said in 1988 that we need a new paradigm within preschool education. It is time to stop polarizing between a structured, teacher-oriented programme and a child-centred play curriculum.

I believe we need cognitively oriented preschool education, but not the traditional one focusing on skills and knowledge, as found in primary school. It is important to stress that children in primary school have to learn the skills of reading, writing and counting, enabling them to use these later in school to grasp other subject matter. But to be able to develop the skills of reading, writing and counting, children's consciousness must, among other things, have been focused on these aspects of their reality. These skills must appear meaningful in the child's world. To work with an experience-oriented preschool education means focusing on the experienced world, the child's existing and experienced world, which has to be made visible and understandable. The theoretical purpose behind this approach is that the way children see, experience or conceptualize something in the world around them is more fundamental than knowledge and skills.

In the experience-oriented approach, the child's thinking is presupposed to be content - and context - dependent. This means that the programme starts with and is directed towards the child's experienced reality. From this perspective children's social and emotional experience is indistinguishable from the child's cognitive capacity.

What children need for growing and feeling well is a question touching children's understanding of themselves and others as physical, psychological and emotional human beings. Nevertheless, it is a cognitive question, a question about a content which can be the focus of children's attention, on which children can reflect in many different settings to raise their level of conciousness.

The experience-oriented approach has a what aspect and a how aspect. The what aspect in the alternative approach, presented here, ought to be systematic working on developing children's conceptions of different phenomena in the world around them, as one aspect of the preschool programme. It could be children's ideas about skills such as mathematics, reading and writing, but also more specific conceptions within these skills, such as numbers, or the characteristics of a written language. The content should also be children's conceptions of learning, and include specific aspects of natural, cultural, or social orientation.

How children experience and conceptualize different aspects of the world is fundamental to their learning and development. Many children develop the basic ways of discovering these aspects spontaneously,

although not everyone. It is the same for children in primary school. Many children are able to read when they start school but still the focus in school at this stage is, among other things, on learning this skill. To work on developing the ideas of knowledge and skills means to work at different levels of generality. The consequence is that the focus must alternate between the concrete content or the structure of understanding (which could be different connections) and more general phenomena such as the children's own learning and how they think about it.

The how aspect, as far as the teachers are concerned, means that they cannot get hold of a manual with instructions on what action or necessary steps to take, but they could be provided with information on children's thinking about the different phenomena one wants children to develop their conceptions about, and examples of possible strategies for helping them. Obviously, teachers must have both material and methods, but the most important thing is to grasp the opportunities in the 'here and now' situation. They need, in reality, to get children to think and reflect in order to develop their understanding of different aspects of the world around them.

There are two ways of following this approach in preschool. One way is to distinguish themes ('centres of interest'). Another way is to utilize everyday life in preschool. When the teacher is conscious of her goal, that is, what aspect of understanding to focus on, she can thematize everyday settings. This can happen in situations created by the children, or the teacher can create situations and actions that can be objects of reflection.

The most important thing when it comes to the methodological aspect is to take advantage of the preschool tradition of creativity and play. The flow of ideas is more important than the actual knowledge. To be able to think and share thoughts means that the child must feel that his thoughts are important, however they appear in relation to real knowledge. The self-concepts children hold, concerning themselves as learners, are an important component in education. For this reason, the preschool tradition with a play-centred way of working is preferable as a gateway to the world of education. Children hardly ever fail in play activities since it is they who are in control.

The kind of education I claim to be a new direction does not exist today, either in preschool or in primary school, but it can grow out of a co-operation between the teachers from these two stages. For a teacher to be oriented towards children's development of ideas means that one has to be able to enter into a relationship with every child at every level. Of course, this requires the involvement of the adult. In Sweden the ratio of

children to teachers is less in preschool than in primary school. This means that preschool teachers have more opportunities for co-operation. In addition to a knowledge of child development in relation to thinking, and personal resources, the environment is of great importance. Anyone who has been to a Swedish preschool and has also seen a typical classroom in primary school knows that the environment in preschool is normally more stimulating and provides the children with a larger area in which to be creative and active, not only with their brains, as is usual in school. When talking about lowering the age at which Swedish children begin school, one should know that most preschool children in Sweden are involved in preschool services during some period of their early childhood, some for long periods, others for only a short time.

Whether an activity is called 'preschool' or 'primary school' is unimportant. What is more important is the content and methods likely to be used in the future when children in Sweden begin school at 6 years old. If the responsible people in the local authorities believe that our 6-year-olds should begin in the traditional primary school, where a large group of children sit in their benches and listen to the teacher trying to transmit knowledge, or where all the children work with the same teacher-structured activities - then perhaps one should consider the possibility of raising the school age instead of lowering it.

It is astonishing that the most far-reaching school reform of the twentieth century does not include any measures in the form of wider qualifications to prepare the group of teachers who are supposed to work with the 6-year-olds in the future. In fact, lowering school admission age is only one aspect of a much wider reorganization of the school system as a whole in Sweden.

To be 6 years old in the 1990s in Sweden can involve children in a new and thrilling introduction to life-long learning. It can also mean that children are forced into a school that could put the brakes on, and seriously obstruct their progress regarding positive self-concepts and willingness to learn.

DEVELOPMENT OF COGNITIVE FACULTIES: ONE OF THE MAIN OBJECTS OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

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We are currently creating new programmes for preschool education. First it is expedient to examine the reasons for the development of these programmes. In considering these reasons, I shall draw on programmes directed at preschool children's intellectual education.

1) *From a utilitarian to a humanistic conception of preschool childhood.*
A child is a human being who needs understanding, care, and respect for his or her rights. The self-value of the preschool period of childhood, is prominent. The idea of 'self-value' implies the absence of all coercion, the inadmissibility of forcing on a child any forms of education that are alien to his or her interests or inclinations. In our opinion, the latter include school-type educational forms which we were, until recently, much too keen on, for example: practices aimed at getting the children to master knowledge and skills. The 'self-value' of childhood, however, by no means rules out all forms of schooling. Children's young lives can be fully-fledged and replete only under the condition that they feel themselves not merely 'wards', but active participants, constantly making new discoveries, joining in the life of grown-ups, in their 'secrets'.

2) *The place occupied by preschool childhood on the staircase of human personality development.*
Through the works of representatives of Vygotsky's school, especially those of Daniil Elkonin, there is, firmly implanted in this country's psychology, the notion of the historical origin of the various periods of childhood, in particular of its preschool period. It originated in the course of history as a period of the formation of psychological traits common to all humankind, as yet not divided up into knowledge and skills, the acquisition of which begins at school age. Such knowledge and skills are formed through activity; for example - actions with objects, playing, drawing, constructing with building blocks. These types of activity, just as preschool childhood as a whole, took shape historically and, therefore,

by analyzing such behaviour, psychological traits that form in the course of such skill development can be pin-pointed. This identification can inform decisions about the necessary direction of preschool education.

An analysis of the types of 'child-like' activity, from the point of view of the course of the developing cognitive processes, shows that they include, first of all, perception, visual-imaginative thinking, and productive (creative) imagination. Only towards the end of the preschool period of childhood, in the complex types of joint play based on plots and roles, do conditions begin to take shape that further the appearance of verbal reasoning types of thinking. However, simply pointing out the cognitive processes developing at a preschool age does not yet provide reference-points for building up the programme of preschool education.

In various types of activity the cognitive processes acquire different characteristics, in line with the specifics of these activities. These variable characteristics are not significant for further development but constitute the common core which, once formed, helps to successfully carry out new types of activity. This core is made up of cognitive faculties.

Our studies of the development of cognitive faculties in various types of preschool children's activities, show that development is based on acquiring different forms of mediated solutions to cognitive problems. That is the creation and use of images which correspond to the forms of reflecting diverse features of objects and phenomena, their interconnections and interrelations, forms already firmly established in human culture. In the process of perception, these are images corresponding to sensory standards, that is to conventional models of external features (shape, colour, size of objects, their position in space, the pitch of a sound, the phonemic structure of speech). In the process of visual-imaginative thinking and imagination, these are images corresponding to different kinds of visual models: schemes, drafts, plans, diagrams and so on.

Since the children's activities are full of the richest materials for imaginative connections, the respective abilities develop in all children. This development, however, occurs spontaneously and irregularly, and the potential of individual children is not maximized. It is quite a different picture when the development of abilities becomes an object of special educational instruction.

In this case the level of the cognitive development of all children rises sharply. Children advance substantially not only in acquiring childlike types of activity as such, but also in solving a wide range of cognitive problems, including problems of a creative nature.

We maintain that the programme of preschool children's intellectual education should be directed at developing their cognitive faculties, which can be divided into intellectual-learning and intellectual-creative abilities. The programme would include, expanded and intensified, the traditional types of children's activity. The imparting of information on the three R's, and on natural phenomena, is also maintained. The acquisition of all these, however, is secondary to the development of logical ability, (where knowledge is selected and systematized depending on the complexity of the mediator means needed to acquire them). The methods of preschool education change cardinally - the children are offered a system of consistently ever more complicated problems, which require the employment and independent development of imaginative solutions; at first these means have an external form and only later become internalized.

Programmes based on these principles are developmental in the full sense of the word. The direct object of education is the development of abilities, while the acquisition of knowledge and skills takes place in so far as they are necessary for this development. The focus of attention is moved from the question of what factual material the children should be taught to that of how to teach it.

The means of cognition that the children adopt in early childhood consists of the following. In the younger group (3-4-year-olds) the chief means are sensory standards. In the medium group (4-5-year-olds) they are visual models of spatial relations - visual models reflecting quantitative relations, the interrelations of sounds in a work, the interconnections of natural phenomena, relation between the content and the volume of a concept.

The experimental programme of the development of cognitive faculties is being conducted, it started in September 1990. The 1990-1991 programme for the younger group included lessons in sensory education. These took the form of increasingly complex educational games which included the organization of children's actions with models of colour, shape, size, sounds of speech. Through listening to the reading of story books and using learning materials, the children were given an idea of phenomena occurring in the world around them. A significant place in the programme was devoted to 'guiding games', involving plots and roles, artistic activities and music lessons.

All these activities were conducted in subgroups, and while one subgroup worked with a teacher, the other was occupied in free play. The children's development was under constant psychological control.

The experimental education of the younger group of children suggested that if attention is focused on sensory education, the programme of developing sensory abilities can be fully realized on children of 3-4 years of age. At present the programme for the medium group is being piloted. Here, the central place belongs to lessons acquainting children with spatial relations and with constructing. In the older group we plan to devote the main series of lessons to logical-mathematical and literary-creative studies.

Alongside devising and piloting the programme aimed at developing the cognitive faculties of children of all preschool-age groups, we are investigating the possibility of selection, giving special training to intellectually gifted children of the elder preschool age.

Our study suggests that the programme of developing cognitive faculties guarantees development, and creates the optimal opportunity for taking into account the "self-value" of preschool childhood. It offers a chance to help every child live a really full-fledged life during this period, whilst advancing a new solution to the issue of preparing children for school. The high level of development of cognitive faculties is a more important prerequisite for successful education than the acquisition of concrete knowledge, skills and rules of behaviour.

INTERACTIVE CURRICULUM - INTERACTIVE PEDAGOGY

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Preschool programmes or curricula are usually described as either child-centred or adult-centred, reflecting two opposing views on learning, education and the origin of knowledge. There is, however, a third possibility, the curriculum that is both child and adult-centred and which reflects an alternative conception of learning and education.

Our action research studies on curriculum development, involved an alternative, constructivist epistemology, and resulted in the development of an interactive curriculum and the corresponding theory of education - interactive pedagogy.

This paper presents how, in the process of action research, an interactive curriculum results from the joint action/ interaction/ negotiation between preschool children and the adults in charge of them. The analysis is performed on both the 'microlevel' of an ongoing activity (interactions with material, among children, and between children and adults) and the 'macrolevel' of longer periods of time, where the development of 'projects', or 'the construction/negotiation of curricula' is visible. In such a process, interactive pedagogy is the teacher's own theory of education, the reflection of their actual educational praxis.

According to Stenhouse, the word *curriculum* is used (at least in the English speaking world) to mean either 'what does in fact happen' in school ('what happens to children as a result of what teachers do') or 'an intention, a plan or prescription'. We will keep the first meaning and use *programme* (which has a similar ambiguity about it) for the second. But the issue is much more complicated.

Not only do we have to differentiate between the 'official' or 'formal' programme and 'hidden curriculum', but much closer to 'what happens in schools' are teachers' intentions and plans, their 'personal programmes', derived more from what we call 'teachers' implicit pedagogics' than from the official programme. But the most complex issue is 'the reality' - 'what in fact happens in school'. It is not a simple, objective reality that can be easily and unanimously recognised and then related to teachers' plans and children's learning (the effects). Rather, is

it a subjectively perceived and socially constructed reality, owing much to our expectations (plans) and previous knowledge. 'What happens in the school' as a result of the teachers' plans - the curriculum - is a complex, multifaceted and dynamic series of interactions, that can become known only after the event described, analysed and eventually related to teachers' plans and children's learning. There are children's interactions with materials and media, interactions between children, and teacher-child, or teacher-children interactions.

Now, in teacher-centred programmes, the curriculum is centred on teacher-children interactions, that turn into teacher-children relations of power, authority and a one-way communication of predefined structure of knowledge and understanding. As predefined, the knowledge to be transmitted or the procedure of building up knowledge is usually abstract, decontextualized and, for most children or at least for some, personally meaningless. Since the teacher follows her predefined procedure, there is only interaction for those children who are on the same 'wave-length'.

In the child-centred programme, interactions with material and between children predominate, but there is also opportunity for teacher-child interactions if the group is small enough. More often that not, the educational philosophy behind this type of programme is individualistic, paying no attention to the social origin of knowledge and development. Thus, interactions with materials predominate, as well as children's spontaneous play without the teacher's intervention. Teacher-child interactions take the form of individual help and instruction.

It seems that in such types of curricula the teacher has more time and opportunity for prolonged and meaningful interactions with each child. This, however, depends on the teacher-children ratio, her knowledge and the possibility of knowing each child's personal experiences out of school. A more serious constraint comes from teachers' need to have some degree of control over whole groups. Observation studies in classrooms have often found an inverse relation between the degree of structure and control: less teacher structured group activities end up with more teacher control over children's behaviour (Sylva et al., 1980).

Although the presented description of alternative types of programmes/curricula is rather crude and oversimplified, it can be easily associated with the two predominant educational traditions: the traditional school and 'school-like' types of preschool programmes, and the alternative tradition more specific of preschool education (e.g. British nursery school, Montessori...). At the same time, it reflects two opposing conceptions of learning: development and education. Simplifying again, we can say that the first defines learning as the acquisition of knowledge

and education as the process of transmission, while for the second, learning is something that happens in the head of an individual - the child, and education is a matter of nurturing, providing for this individual process.

If, however, we conceive learning as social construction of knowledge, or better, socially mediated construction, then education is that process of mediation, or co-construction. It is not something that a teacher does for a child or children, or something that happens to the child, but something that happens between them.

The role of social interactions is crucial in learning (producing cognitive change or constructing knowledge) because constructions are, first, interpsychological and only afterwards intra-psychological. The zone of proximal development (the construction zone) however, can be provided by other children and not only the adult. This is particularly important in the context of institutional education, school or preschool, where opportunities for social interactions between children abound.

Designing a curriculum, in this theoretical perspective, becomes an issue of 'creating systems of social interactions' or creating a context that will enhance the constructive power of interaction and communication between children. This, in turn, calls for a change in teachers' personal programmes, or implicit pedagogics, a change in their understanding of children and of their own educational practices.

In our action research study on teacher-based and school-based curriculum development, performed in collaboration with six teachers of one kindergarten in Belgrade[1] we did not start from theory (the constructivist), but developed (or constructed) an interactive pedagogy in the course of self-reflexive cycles of transformations of educational practices.

The action research paper really began at the moment when one of the teachers became aware of the discrepancy (the gap) between her intentions ('to start from the children's needs and interests') and practices ('she was starting from what she in advance though children's needs and interests were'). The period of teachers' participant observations and children's 'freedom' led to the reversal of their roles: it was the teachers who followed children's activities in order to understand and help their constructive interactions, instead of asking them to follow her prestructured and predefined sequences of learning.

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1. The study was presented at the last OMEP Congress in London.

Observation of children during this three week period and later experiments with different levels of teachers' interventions in children initiated activities, led to:

(1) a new organisation of 'the classroom'. This included work in small groups of 3 to 5 children, with the teacher remaining most of the time with one group;

(2) further elaboration of the teacher's role in these groups. Only in such small groups working on a common problem, or engaged in the same task, can the teacher become a partner who correctly sees each child's view of the problem or the task and intervenes accordingly: supports interactions, adds new elements, validates arguments, suggests the solution.

Teachers, too, need the context of social interactions, among themselves, in order to construct an alternative pedagogy. The method of action research, the repeated cycles of planning, acting, observing (here video-recording proves indispensable), and evaluating, link up the social (mutual) construction and the theory of education.

Reference

Sylva, K., Roy, C. and Painter, M. (1980) *Childwatching at Playgroup and Nursery School* London, Grant McIntyre

SECTION 3: SUMMARIES

SUMMARIES

The following are summaries of papers which were presented at the conference. Space does not permit us to include the full texts of all papers. However, due to the diversity of topics and the interest these may have for our international audience we have decided to include summaries of these papers.

The development of aesthetic consciousness in the process of preschool education

Sebastian Garsia-Garrido, University of Malaga, Spain

This paper described the development of aesthetic consciousness in young children through active processes, with children transferring some basic aesthetic ideas into play, and there developing them. The child is said to form aesthetic standards through active contact with objects, as well as by visualizing, perception and analysis of images, but this cannot occur in isolation. Further, the child needs opportunities to perceive and interpret surroundings creatively, independently, and through expressions of individuality.

The organisation of teaching writing: introduction to writing

Cristobel Gonzales Alvares, University of Malaga, Spain

This paper argues that the process of writing is a social practice allowing prolonged relationships in terms of time and space. Because of this, teaching children to read and write is important in the preschool period. Research into the most appropriate methods for doing this are described. In the case of writing, children's ability to perceive verbal symbols both aloud and unspoken are important as are: perception of symbols of a certain system; possible combinations of these symbols, and their adequacy to the linguistic phonemes.

Important factors in teaching writing to six year old children include: adequate learning experience; children's motivation; beneficial socio-cultural background; parents' and teachers' attitudes to the teaching process; methods being used.

The writer concludes that writing is an activity of reflection of words and thoughts by graphics means and the involvement of different instruments.

Physical health: the treatment of gluteal fibrosis
Manuel Guillen del Castillo, University of Cordoba, Spain

This paper describes a study of the condition known as gluteal fibrosis, in which a child experiences a shortening of the pelvic and thigh muscles, as well as rotational difficulties in the lower limbs. As a result, children with the condition have movement difficulties. The project provided 76 children, diagnosed as having gluteal fibrosis in the survey of 1,000 students aged between five and 13 years, with selected exercises to alleviate the condition. The survey also indicated that the age of seven is significant for diagnosis in both girls and boys.

Israel's programme for upgrading early childhood teachers and paraprofessionals in developing countries
Marilyn Jasik, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Developing nations around the world see early childhood services as a means of improving life in rural and urban communities. For 30 years Israel has helped developing nations build these services for children, families and communities through a person-to-person, country-to-country outreach programme.

Based at the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre for Community Services in Haifa, Israel, the programme has trained thousands of persons from 110 countries through its courses in English, French and Spanish, at the Centre. Thousands more have been trained 'on location' in their own countries and in their own languages, through 'on the spot' early childhood training workshops.

The integrative functions of games in the pedagogical process and in children's creativity
Elka Petrova, Sofia University, Bulgaria

This paper discusses the important place of educational games in preschool provision. Theoretical difficulties are considered:
- the problem of different game functions in the pedagogical process;
- the game function in the intensification of the educational process and the development of the components of educational activity;

Games were a means of developing children's learning in a creative way and a means by which teachers could enable children to be independent.

Some organisational issues are touched upon and the author concludes that the organisation, management and the teaching process makes it possible to develop social abilities and individual traits of children alongside the development of general intellectual faculties.

The development of the equivalence relation
Miriam Wolters, University of Utrecht, Netherlands

The premise of this paper is that children in the first grade of school can be helped to discover properties of relations by going through a rich variety of activities which are divided into three levels: concrete manipulative-verbal level; perceptual-representation using diagrams and pictures; abstract symbolic level.
At the end of the second grade, tasks were presented to three groups of students:
Group 1 were taught by a structuralist mathematics programme including the activities above;
Group 2 were taught by a mechanistic programme;
Group 3 were taught by a realistic programme.
The tasks presented were to measure students' understanding of the symmetrical property of the equivalence relation. The results show that the control groups (2 and 3) ignore the bi-directional nature of the equal sign.

A musical gift and its diagnosis in preschool children
Kiri Tarassova, Research Institute of Preschool Education, Moscow

This paper argues that gifted children are a treasure of society and that their talents should be cultivated and fostered. A detailed definition of musical giftedness is given which, according to the author's research includes the following substructures: special musical faculties; general artistic faculties; general indications of giftedness.

A musically gifted child is considered to be 'brilliant' in the field of music, this 'brilliance' being distinguished by rapid development of musical ability in comparison to peers. Such children show: an early interest in music; an inclination to play music; a highly emotional response to music; a longing to compose; a capacity to compose; an ability to make music.

The neurophysiological and neuropsychological foundation of socialization: preschool children's gender-role behaviour

Tamara Khrizman, Research Institute of Preschool Education, Moscow

This paper presented various aspects of research evidence concerning the ways in which boys and girls brain development differ, especially the development of the two hemispheres (see Gervilla Castillo's paper earlier), with boys demonstrating 'a more progressive lateralization' of all mental functions, higher levels of interhemispherical functional asymmetry, and more dynamic interhemispherical interaction. Girls meanwhile, are said to be activized in the acoustic, visual and lower parietal zones of the brain.

UNESCO and Early Child Development

Early childhood care and education is now viewed by scientific and educational research as the first and essential stage of the basic education process. Recent world conferences testify to a growing appreciation of the crucial importance of the child's earliest years, and of the need to support families and communities in their role as the child's most influential educator.

Improving children's health and nutrition is a first duty, but increasingly, in a situation where twelve out of thirteen of the world's children survive until the age of one, governments and civil society are turning their attention to the psycho-social and cognitive development of children. There is ample evidence[1] to show that healthy children who have experienced good early learning programmes are much more likely than other children to remain in primary school and achieve good results. In addition, countries that succeed in mobilizing local government, municipalities, communities and voluntary organizations in the care and education of very young children have been able to decentralise and innovate in their educational systems and, at the same time, make an important contribution toward population information and the education of women.

UNESCO joins with other specialized agencies of the United Nations, in particular UNICEF and WHO, in assisting governments:

- to forge links at national level between between the primary education system and early child development programming;

- to identify and support first-class universities and institutes which will research national needs and train high-level personnel to plan and animate national or regional policies;

- to support model early childhood and family development projects that stress the inner needs of children and the education of women;

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1. See Myers, R. *The Twelve Who Survive*, Routledge/UNESCO 1992

- to promote legislation on behalf of children and families, and in particular, the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

In addition, UNESCO in keeping with its educational, scientific and cultural mandate:

- encourages research leading to practical action in favour of young children and families;

- acts as a networking and clearing centre for information and briefings on early childhood;

- seeks to prepare children for schools and schools for children by encouraging and promoting respect for the young child's natural, learning process;

- collaborates in artistic, intellectual and cultural events promoting reflection on childhood and family issues.

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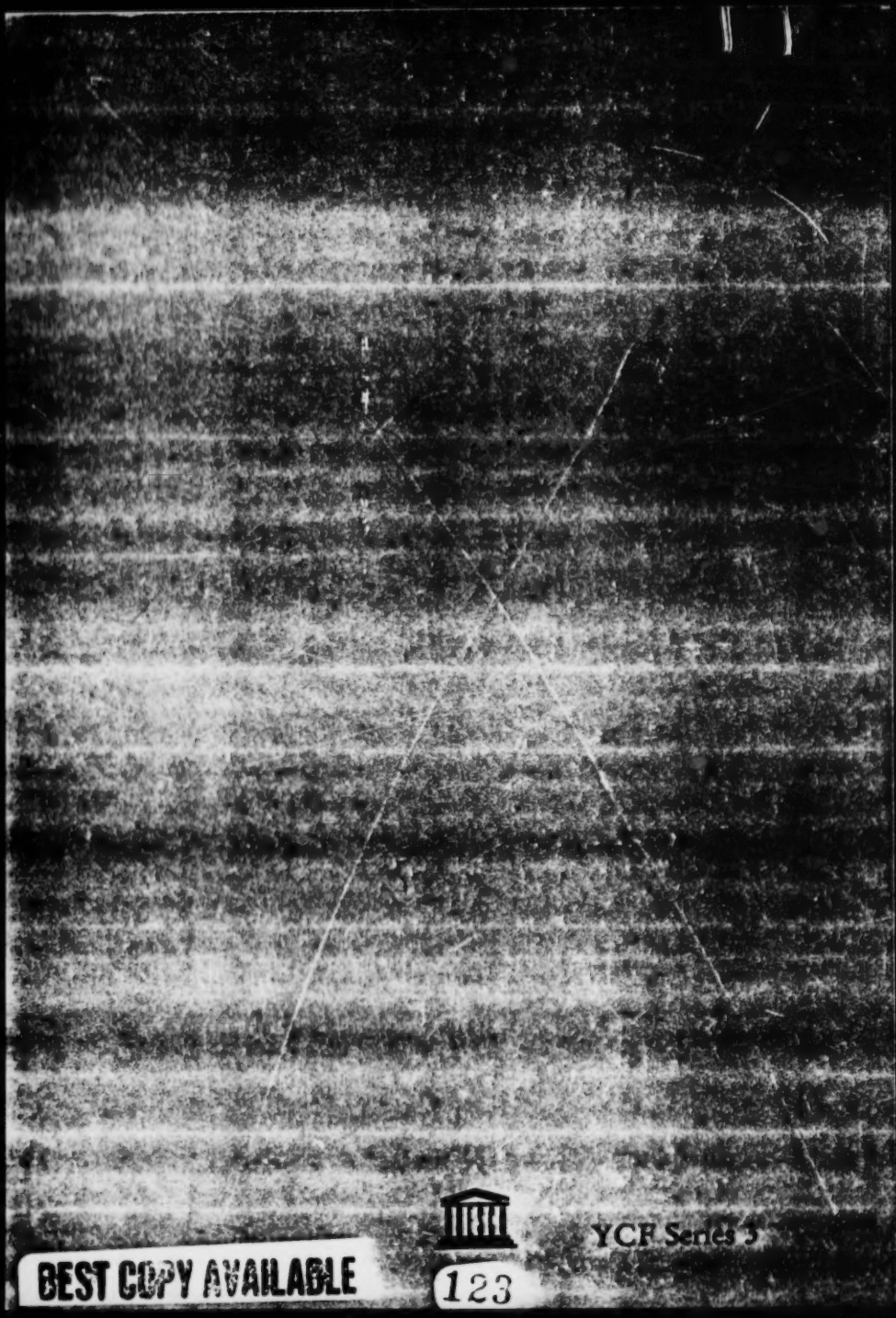

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